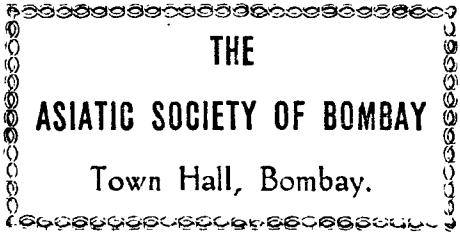

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SCRAMBLES IN THE EASTERN GRAIANS



Scrambles in the Eastern Graians

1878 - 1897

B 1888

By

George Yeld

Editor of the *Alpine Journal*

65911

With Twenty Illustrations and a Map



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To

TEMPEST ANDERSON

TO WHOSE PHOTOGRAPHS THE READERS OF THIS BOOK, AND TO WHOSE FRIENDSHIP ITS AUTHOR OWE SO MUCH

PREFACE

THIS book is the outcome of many summer visits to the Eastern Graians; and most of the volume has appeared at different times in the *Alpine Journal*, and no inconsiderable part has been read before the Alpine Club.

These mountains have always had a peculiar fascination for me, indeed, I may say of my first sight of the Grivola, as Keats says of Lycius at the sight of Lamia :—

> 'And soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up,
> Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup,
> And still the cup was full.'

Ay, and yet remains so.

The superb ice and snow scenery of the Cogne peaks is enhanced by the nearness of the Aosta Valley with all its wealth of vines and fruit trees. This combination, so truly Italian, greatly increases the pleasure of the traveller, who may pass, in a short day, from almost tropical richness of vegetation to the grim solitudes and icy fastnesses of the great peaks and glaciers. Here, too, the all weather wanderer (of course *high* climbing is not advocated except when the atmospheric conditions are favourable) enjoys ever and again most wonderful sights. No one who has not seen the clouds disperse and the mighty form of the Grivola or the Tour St Pierre suddenly appear in a robe of 'semilucent mist, diversely tinged with rose and amethyst,' can form an idea of one of the most impressive moods of the mountains.

Though I have never had the happiness of seeing the lusty flowers in June's caress, I have, even in late summer, found them in such profusion and perfection as to delight an old gardener's heart. The forests that clothe the slopes above the Grand Eyvia, the Orco and the Savara, deserve a place in the 'laudes Italiæ'; and when you regard the terraces built up on the steep mountain side with so much painful toil, and admire the modest harvest of wheat or barley or rye, which the assiduous care and patience of the peasant extorts from rocky knoll and stone-strewn slope, you feel anew the power and truth of that glorification of labour, which the gentle spirit and sympathetic genius of the great Mantuan has made immortal in his 'Georgics.'

The Cogne group is still unswept by the wave of tourists which annually floods

so many districts of the Alps, and the lover of the mountains may enjoy their glories and the treasures of an unequalled flora all unvexed.

Though there are but two huts (both excellent) in the district, the shepherds and herdsmen are always courteous and hospitable, and the Italian climbers will always extend the hand of goodfellowship to English mountaineers. Of late, moreover, the inns and the food, though they still leave something to be desired, have much improved, while the district now boasts one grand hotel at Ceresole.

When I first visited the district in 1878, there were still many little orographical problems to be solved, and some first ascents and new routes to be made, though it must be clearly stated that the Italians had done much for the exploration of their beautiful mountains. Though Mr Cowell's

party was first on the summit of the Grand Paradis, Mr Ormsby's on the Grivola, and Mr D. W. Freshfield's on the Tour St Pierre, yet the Mont Herbetet fell to S. Barale, the Roccia Viva to S. Martelli and the Punta di Gaÿ to S. Vaccarone, while the two last named, Dr Baretti, and later S. G. Bobba, have by their explorations and writings contributed very largely to our present knowledge of the district, as has also S. P. Paganini by his excellent map. To all these mountaineers, as well as to my companions G. P. Baker and W. A. B. Coolidge, I offer my hearty thanks; as I must also do to my friends E. T. Compton, G. P. Baker, Alfred Holmes and Tempest Anderson, for the proofs of their artistic and photographic skill which adorn these pages. I am much indebted to the Committee of the Alpine Club for

permission to reproduce eight of the illustrations as well as the map which originally appeared in the *Alpine Journal.*

The skill, devotion, and good nature of my very good friends the guides, with whom I have had the pleasure of climbing among these mountains, also demand my most grateful recognition. But one regret darkens my pages. James Heelis, excellent climber, companion and friend, has, alas! passed away from amongst us. How much the earlier portion of this book has lost by the absence of his genial and discerning criticism none but the author can estimate. Séraphin Henry sleeps under the shadow of Mont Blanc, and Joseph Jeantet reposes at the end of the great pastures of St Ours surrounded by the circle of his native mountains. *Requiescat in pace.*

I ought perhaps to say that the great majority of the expeditions recounted in

these pages had not been made before, though I have not always emphasised the fact in my narrative; such details will mostly be found in the *Climber's Guide to Cogne*. I have included the account of the first ascent of the Aiguille de Tronchey in this volume as it was a sop of comfort after the failure owing to bad weather of my Cogne campaign of 1896.

This work is not, of course, intended as in any shape a guide book, though I hope it may be useful to future mountain lovers. *The Climber's Guide to the Mountains of Cogne* and the new edition of *Boll's Alpine Guide to the Western Alps* are indispensable to all who purpose serious work in the district.

The map which appeared in the *Alpine Journal* for May 1893 has been improved, though it is still not all that could be wished; but I hope that the new one

which the Italian Alpine Club are now preparing, and in the production of which they have done me the honour to invite me to assist, may provide a final and satisfactory map of the whole district.

GEORGE YELD.

CLIFTON COTTAGE, YORK.
June 4, 1900.

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SCRAMBLES IN THE EASTERN GRAIANS

CHAPTER I

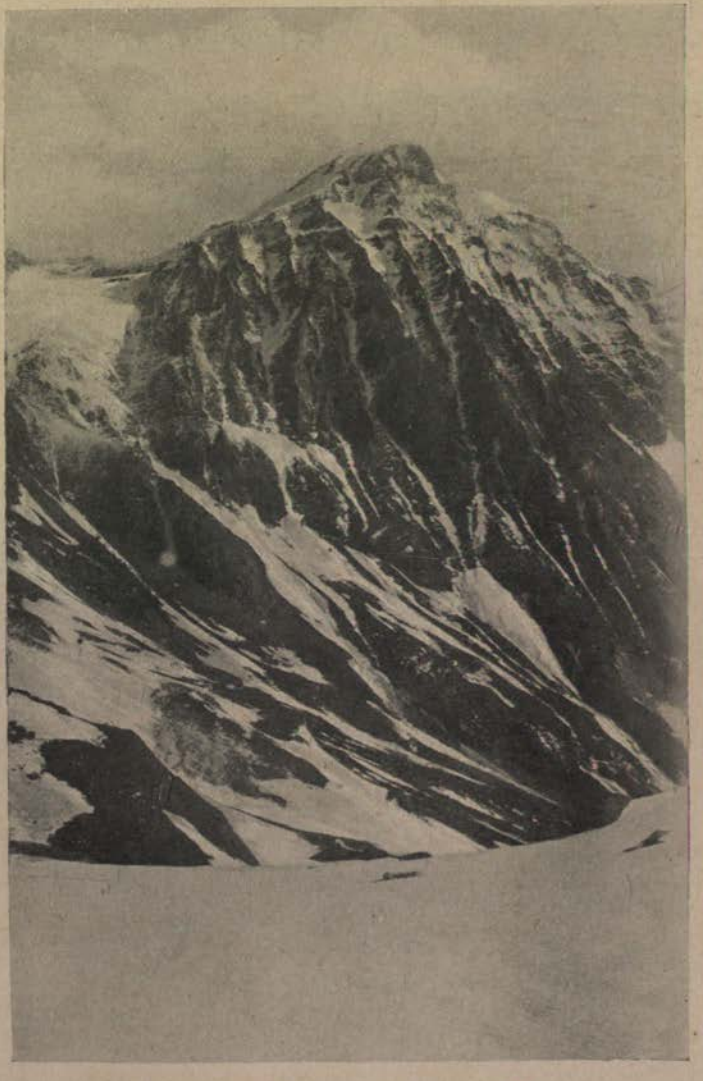
The south-western Graians in 1878—Bonneval—Ciamarella—Col du Grand Méan—Albaron—Roc du Mulinet—Central Levanna—Col de Girard—Forno—Colle della Piccola—Ceresole Reale—Unsuccessful Attempt on the Grand Paradis—Pointe de la Galise—Granta Parei—Col de Fos—Vaudet—Col de Vaudet—Tignes—Chalet de la Cascade—Aiguille de la Grande Sassière—Col du Palet—From Chamonix to Tignes in 1880.

My acquaintance with the Graian Alps began in the summer of 1878, when, in company with my friend the late James Heelis, an excellent climber and one of the kindliest of men, and Alphonse Payot of Chamonix, I arrived at Bonneval-sur-Arc (6021 feet) on August 4.

Bonneval is now provided with a good little inn, but in those days the accommoda-

tion was limited, the food Spartan in character and quantity, and the surroundings primitive in the extreme. In M. Culet, the landlord, however, we found a mountain enthusiast, as we expected to do from Mr Cowell's description of him. A council of war was held in the summer-house at the end of the garden, in which a few lettuces made as fair a show on't as they could, and as the result of our deliberations we engaged J. J. Blanc *dit le Greffier*, who was recommended to us as a keen climber, and who afterwards proved himself a good man on rocks, and to start the next morning for the Col de Séa.

On August 5 we left Bonneval at 5.12 a.m., and reached the Col de Séa at 9.12. Here we spent a lazy hour, and then I started to make the first ascent of the Ciamarella (12,061 feet) from the Col, Heelis having good-naturedly agreed to wait for us. After reaching a second col, Signor Martelli's Col Tonini, nearer the Ciamarella than the Col de Séa, and crossing



THE CIAMARELLA, FROM THE SOUTH.

some steep snow-slopes with a patch of rocks in the middle, we struck the arête of the Ciamarella, which runs towards the Albaron, and so reached the summit. The popularity of the Ciamarella amongst Italians was proved by the number of cards—thirty-four—which we found in the cairn. Clouds and mist robbed us of the distant view. We then rejoined Heelis on the Col. Rain fell before we reached Bonneval, but afterwards the clouds passed away and revealed a frosty and star-sown sky.

Our only expedition on August 6, except to a pleasant alder-shaded resting-place amongst the rocks just across the bridge over the Arc, where oak and other ferns grew luxuriantly, was to one of the torrents above Bonneval to bathe. At 2 a.m. on the 7th it rained heavily, so that we did not start for the Albaron as we had intended to do. But as the weather afterwards improved we left Bonneval about 9,

accompanied by Payot. In 2 hrs. 5 mins. from the Glacier des Evettes we reached our col (circa 10,650), which we named Col du Grand Méan,[1] after crossing several snow-ridges of surpassing beauty. We went down to Bonneval by the Glacier du Mulinet and the Récula torrent. I here had my first experience as leader, and to my no little satisfaction found the bridge over the bergshrund at once.

On August 8, with Payot and the Greffier, we started at 2.20 a.m. for the Albaron. We followed the usual route to the Glacier des Evettes, and then, instead of crossing the ice and trying to force a way through the séracs to the south-west, kept at a considerable height above the glacier. Here I gathered 'le vrai génépy des Alpes,' and we saw several ptarmigan. Our route then lay across the snow-slopes under the northern arête of the Albaron, and walking very

[1] There is a curious mistake in the French Etat-Major map to the south of the Glacier du Grand Méan, where the height of 3858 mètres is attached to a nameless peak.

leisurely under a blazing sun and in very soft snow we struck the eastern arête of our mountain, at a height of 11,600, at 10.10. The last part of the slope immediately below the arête was of ice. We then kept along the ridge and reached the summit (12,015), over snow and rocks, at 11.10. Much less time would usually suffice.

From the summit there was no view owing to the clouds. Our descent to the valley of the Arc below Bonneval was wearisome, though we had one fine view of the valley in a gleam of sunshine, with the zigzags of the Mont Cenis road well seen in the distance. The river Arc looked like molten silver, and the petty villages of Villaron and Bessans, with their grey-red houses, were very picturesque. The monotony of the climb was varied in one place by Heelis making the Greffier leave the rotten rocks which had tried our tempers, and glissade down a very steep slope, on which we managed not to come to grief.

At 2.25 a.m. on August 10 we started for the Roc du Mulinet or Cima Martellot (11,382). Our ascent was made by the couloir on the right of the peak, which is well seen from M. Culet's garden. We reached the top without any hurry at 8.50 (halts included). At the foot of the peak we noticed a number of dragon-flies lying frozen on the snow. I still remember the magnificent view. Most of the great peaks of Dauphiné, the Cottians, the Graians, and the Pennines, stood up before us. Mont Blanc with his mighty Aiguilles, spear after spear, set in array about him, being most majestic.

On our way back we were overtaken by heavy rain, the prelude to a thunderstorm, which, however, did not last long.

On August 11 we said good-bye to our host, and left Bonneval in the afternoon (without the Greffier, but with the addition of Jean Martin, who had arrived on the previous evening) for one of M. Culet's chalets at Duis, on the banks of the Arc,

about 2 hrs. above Bonneval. At 6.25 we reached the chalet, from the river lawn in front of which the Ciamarella and Albaron are well seen. The accommodation was good, and the brawling of the Arc invited to sleep.

Our intention was to climb the Central Levanna (11,943) and descend to Ceresole. We effected the ascent without any trouble, and were well rewarded by the view. In our descent, having reached the Glacier de la Source de l'Arc, we made for the gap between the Eastern Levanna and the Levannetta, with the intention of descending to Ceresole, but Martin, on inspection, there was much *verglas*, pronounced against the slope at our feet in its existing state, and then made for the Col de Girard at a good pace. When we reached the Col and began to descend we were met by a thick mist, but the track of a previous party saved us much trouble, and we reached Forno at 4.20 p.m., having loitered when some way down to gather bilberries.

We found Forno an agreeable change after Bonneval; there was a warmth and softness even at this height which reminded us that we had entered Italy. The guides, too, were pleased, for, as they said, 'à Bonneval il était bien triste—ici il y a du monde.' At Bonneval our 'world,' besides the members of M. Culet's household, consisted of a stonecutter who had been in America, whose English was confined to 'Good-night, Mistare, slip vel,' and a nefarious brute of a dog who every evening came to bark at us. He had cunning too as well as ill-temper. We duly stoned him in the lower part of the village on every return from climbing, but when he got in sight of the inn we refrained lest M. Culet should be offended, for we were under the impression that the dog belonged to one of his cronies. Thus did this cur daily vent his spite against us. One evening, however, I heard M. Culet describe him as 'that villain beast,' and at our next homecoming

the mongrel had a very hot five minutes. But eventually his local knowledge triumphed. He took to barking on a house roof where I could not stone him for fear of breaking one of the few windows which adorned the vicinity of the inn. Thence he anathematised us in security.

The inhabitants were busy threshing rye with flails, which they wielded with great skill; every sheaf ran the gauntlet of the flails of a whole family, sometimes as many as ten or twelve. The proprietor of the Forno inn was absent, but a spruce manager from Turin attended to us with much civility, and we really fared very well. While we were at dinner under a screen of birch boughs in front of the inn, where on our arrival the curé was enjoying a game of cards with some of his flock, we saw more of the 'monde' of Forno; first, several young officers in uniform, and presently, to our astonishment, a party of young ladies. These Oreads were charmingly dressed, and

have often furnished my memory with a pleasing contrast when in later years at some crowded tourist-haunt I have cast unwilling eyes upon,—

> Ladies like clouds which bedizen
> At sunset the western horizon.

Before dinner was over a rabble of children gathered in the road near us, who as soon as we rose from the table cleared off everything that had been left uneaten. We took an evening walk along the Lanzo road, which ran through irrigated meadows, whose bright green formed a striking contrast to the wild crags that showed against the sky.

The guides slept in a sort of barn, which also served as a hen-roost. They went to bed with a candle, which the cock mistook for dawn, and thereupon crowed loudly. Jean rebuked him and put out the light, but the cock crowed again and again. Jean arose, relit his candle, and with harsh words hurled his boots at the too credulous fowl. Out went the candle, and Jean lay down to

sleep, but the cock, like youthful roisterers, must needs give one cheer more. His relatives joined in his well-meant effort. Jean once more his light relumed. Much propelling of many missiles followed, and for the cock's offence the chickens died. At least so we inferred from Jean's undisguised eagerness to take a large supply of fowls with us on the morrow. After all the guides had not much the worst of it, for Heelis and I slept in a sort of crypt so suggestive of the charnel house that, though the beds were clean, we might well have been benightmared with witch and demon. Later travellers give much worse accounts of the Forno inn.

On the morning of the 13th the higher ridges were veiled in mist, so we decided to cross the Colle della Piccola to Ceresole. We understood that decent food there awaited the traveller, and, though we were no Sybarites, we had found the Bonneval dinners but little to our taste. One dish, almost too terrible even for all-compelling

hunger to attack, was, we afterwards inferred from a sentence in an early edition of *Murray*, salted jackass. Hence the epigram of an anonymous sufferer:—

'The donkeys of Bonneval-sur-Arc
No doubt suffer sadly when beaten,
But they have their revenge, save the mark!
When salted, begarlicked, and eaten.
Could the ass-steak but borrow the voice
Which from Balaam's mount once proceeded,
It would cry, "Oh, ye long-eared, rejoice,
These men suffer worse things than we did."'

We passed through some charming scenes on our way to the pass. Many waterfalls dropped their white veils from ledge to ledge, and amongst the moist rocks flourished countless ferns. On the Ceresole side of the Colle there was no mist, and we had a pleasant walk to the Stabilimento, which was reached in something over 8 hrs., very lazy walking, with many halts, including a long one on the Colle.[1]

Picture to yourself a wooden barn on the road to ruin, with a wooden balcony running

[1] 8875 feet in height. The New Ball allows 7 hrs.

along its front. Suppose a large sheet, fastened under the balcony and supported by rude poles, spread out as an awning to keep off the sun. Wattle the space between the barn and the end of the awning with green fir branches; add to this an air of general infirmity, such as to suggest that the first high wind will whirl it all away, and you have the Stabilimento. But the rooms were not uncomfortable and the fare was excellent. The trout were good, and the peaches and pears most acceptable.

In a green meadow in front of this strange hostelry, a shady sycamore offers a cool resting-place of various view. To the left rise bold masses of rocky mountain. In front the Orco foams over the stones in noisy haste to cast himself down the rocks a little lower. Across the river an old house with its air of quiet happiness, its green pasture gently sloping to the Orco, and a line of trees fringing the river's edge, recalls pleasantly the peacefulness of an

English homestead. Behind it rise the pinnacles and spires of a striking ridge that juts out at right angles from the rocky rampart that bounds the southern side of the Val d'Orco, while noble pinewoods clothe the lower slopes and soften the naked wildness of the crags above. The great mass of the Levanna, its dark rocks relieved by the snows of the little Glacier de Forno, and the white slope that falls steeply from the Colle Perduto, fitly closes in the view to the west.

On the afternoon of the 14th we started for a chalet at Broglio, to ascend the Grand Paradis. We had engaged the same local guide who, as porter, accompanied Mr R. Pendlebury's party in 1875. The chalet, height circa 8000 feet, was a most undesirable abode—

> And were I not as a man may say cautious,
> How I trench more than needs on the nauseous,
> I could favour you with sundry touches

which would more than prove the statement.

But there were compensations, for though the prospect was vile, man was anxious to please; assuredly no one could have been more hospitable than the shepherds. It were long to tell how the rain poured down in streams, how an old umbrella did duty for a door, how an invalid dog yelped if you did but look at him, how whenever one got to sleep somebody lit a candle; how in fact we spent a most miserable night. We were roused at 1.30 a.m., and the weather allowed us to start at 3.8.

Soon after sunrise a sight was given to us of marvellous beauty; it is, indeed, impossible to convey an idea of the exquisite tenderness and transparency of the colours. We saw to the south-west, beyond the plain of Italy, a range of dark-blue mountains, with a pale-blue sky above them; nearer us, though still far away, hung threatening clouds, torn from whose fringe floated here and there an inky fragment; while over the plain was spread an ocean of mist,

seeming to be the floor of the plain itself, of a pale oaten yellow, lovely beyond description. One seemed to be looking through some—

> Magic casement opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn.

After passing a rocky col to the north-east, the Colle della Torre (10,457 feet), which we reached by a royal hunting-path, we made for the Col du Mont Corvé; from that point (10,995 feet) our route was probably the same as that of Mr R. Pendlebury's party, and free from difficulty. But alas, when we were about 1½ hrs. from the top, the weather, which had been gradually getting worse, drove us back; so we turned and trudged sullenly down to Ceresole, which was reached at 3.20 p.m.

On the lovely morning of the 17th, with Venus shining softly in a 'daffodil sky,' we left the Stabilimento at 3.20 a.m., and having nearly reached the highest chalet at Cerrù,

halted for breakfast by a clear streamlet. We here engaged a shepherd to carry our baggage, who proved himself a good fellow. We now had in front of us a cirque of repulsive-looking rock, with a broken tower on either side; above the left tower, nearer to the Col de la Galise, there is a prominent snow-peak. We climbed up this left tower and were going to ascend a sharp point of rock that shows well from below; but an easier way was descried, so we struck down a little to the left, kept at a level along the rock wall, and after passing through a natural arch of rock, and crossing several couloirs, still at a level, mounted by rocks to the left, and reached the snow without difficulty. At 10.28 we were on the Pointe de la Galise (10,975).

The view was magnificent; in fact, on the whole, we thought it the finest we enjoyed; even the guides were moved to admiration at the glories spread out before them. Mont Blanc and his Aiguilles were

again cloudless, and all the great Pennine mountains of unspeakable splendour. The Grivola was very striking, and our friend the Levanna looked quite formidable. We saw, too, a great part of the valleys of Ceresole, Laval and Rhèmes, and part of the plain of Italy. We thought that we even distinguished La Superga. We spent 1½ hrs. upon the top, and built a huge cairn, which was afterwards conspicuous from Laval and Soches.

We went down across the snow towards the Col de la Galise, struck a ridge of rocks, descended a little in the direction of the Tsanteleina, and then dropping down a couloir reached the Galise Glacier and so joined the route of the col of the same name. We reached Fornet at 3.5 p.m. The slopes below the glacier were rich in flowers, pansies, gentians, forget-me-nots and Alpine wall-flowers, as well as very fine edelweiss, of which hitherto I had only seen one tuft at Bonneval, on the way to the Glacier

des Evettes, and one or two tufts near Cerrù.

This expedition can be strongly recommended. The view from the Pointe owing to its position, as a glance at the map will show, is certainly one of the finest in the Alps, and the time required is very little longer than would be necessary to cross the pass.

After some delay and discussion at Fornet, we went on down the valley to Laval, where we found decent quarters. Our dinner was much improved by some mushrooms, gathered above Fornet, which, thanks to Heelis's superintendence, were served up in first-rate style.

On the frosty morning of the 18th, after various adventures by the way, we ascended the Granta Parei (11,395 feet) by the south ridge, a climb previously taken by the Misses Pigeon.

We came down by nearly the same route, and then keeping for some distance along

the top of the wall of rock, which runs towards the Tsanteleina, effected a descent to the Glacier de Centelina. Though the last part of our way was down a couloir liable to falling stones, we did not see any stones fall, and I believe it was perfectly safe when we traversed it, as the sun had ceased to strike it for some time. The glacier gave us no trouble, and led us past the eastern face of the Granta Parei, which rises in defiance, precipice after precipice, to the summit of the mountain. We reached the lower chalet at Soches at 4.56 p.m. This chalet was new, clean and commodious, for the builder had evidently kept in view the wants of travellers. The owner was away in the Val d'Aosta, but a shepherd was sent down to Rhèmes and returned with some white bread and a live fowl.

On the 19th we left Soches at 7.22 a.m., and crossed over part of the Glacier de Fos to the chalets of Vaudet in 4 hrs. 5 mins. This col is of the easiest character possible. Before we got to Vaudet we were overtaken

by drenching rain. The chalets were not inviting, but the herdsmen were very hospitable. On an old moraine above the left bank of the Vaudet torrent we saw seventeen or eighteen chamois feeding together.

Our object in coming to Vaudet was to make the ascent of the Aiguille de la Grande Sassière by the rock and ice-slopes on its eastern flank. But the morning of the 20th was very unfavourable, so we were obliged to give up our plan. The chalet was not rain-proof, and Heelis's boots were full of water in consequence, whereat Martin exclaimed loudly, and proceeded promptly, though unintentionally, to pour half the water into mine, which had escaped all perils by faulty roofs.

We left at 6.28 a.m., the mountains being all veiled in churlish mist, and crossed to the Val de Tignes by the Col de Vaudet (9305 feet). From the slopes on the western side of the pass, when the mist had somewhat lifted, we enjoyed a glorious sight; the summit of

the majestic Pourri, with a narrow arch of blue sky above it, the rest of the mountain being wrapped in cloud, while here and there a sunbeam piercing the veil of mist flashed on the glaciers below. As we descended the weather kept improving, and the Val de Tignes in sunshine, with its fir-woods and green pastures, seemed perhaps even more beautiful than it really was after the desolation of the Val Grisanche. Our halts were liberal, and when we got to the bottom of the valley Heelis and I loitered to gather strawberries, which were just at their best. We struck the new road near Brévières, and reached Tignes at 1.17 p.m. Besides the noble glaciers of the Pourri, the fir-woods, cornfields and green meadows, there was much fine scenery on the new road itself, especially in places where it passes through savage gorges by the side of the roaring Isère. Tignes now provides much better accommodation for climbers than it did in 1878.

The morning of the 21st we spent in idleness and the Isère; and in the afternoon went up to the chalet de la Cascade, one of the Sassière châlets. The people were busy haymaking, but we were treated with great hospitality. Our evening here was very enjoyable. Our host and his daughters not only did their best to entertain us, but talked with much intelligence; Martin's cooking was all that could be wished; the chalet was clean; and we were happy in the prospect of a fine day for the morrow; even the dogs, though at first fain to attack, yielded to the persuasion of chicken bones.

The chalet is in a beautiful situation, hard by the torrent, and commands fine views of the Grande Casse and the Grande Motte.

On the next day we ascended the Aiguille de la Grande Sassiére by its south-east ridge, from the Col de la Goletta, a route previously taken but once, viz., by Mr Coolidge. A *double* cornice not far from the top was curious, and required care. By the

time we reached the summit the bitter wind, which had hitherto annoyed us, had died away, and we were able to enjoy the splendid panorama.

We saw once more most of the principal Dauphiné, Graian and Pennine summits, and though there were some clouds in the sky their tints were of so fairylike and tender a loveliness that they added to the glories of the morning. We saw, too, the lower ranges, far away to the west, to great advantage, and the sunny blue waters of the Lac de Tignes set in green pastures, with the little glen below, with its fir-trees and tumbling stream, formed a charming picture —a pastoral daydream—enhanced by contrast with the black precipices and scornful crags of the Grande Casse.

We returned to Tignes, and on the morrow our party separated; Heelis and Martin to Pralognan, and Payot and I by the Col du Palet to Brides les Bains.

In 1880 Payot and I revisited Tignes,

but such heavy rain pelted us on our journey, persecuted us during our stay, and pursued us on our departure, that we returned to Chamonix at once by Ugines, Flumet and Mégève—a route always interesting, but now more beautiful than usual, for, before we reached Flumet, the weather cleared up and gave us unequalled views of the Mont Blanc chain, whose great aiguilles soared white and glittering into the cloudless blue. We saw, too, much lovely sub-Alpine scenery, such as the sternest votary of the great peaks may well rejoice to have beheld.

On one of the loneliest stretches of our way we met a most touching funeral. The father carried the coffin, enveloped in white muslin, in which was prisoned all that was mortal of his little daughter, and the dead child's child friends followed him, clothed in white, with bunches of flowers in their hands.

CHAPTER II

1879—The Pic de la Lune—*Ranunculus Glacialis*—The Ondezana—The Grand Sertz—Herbetet Chalet—The Grand Paradis crossed from Cogne to Ceresole—The Petit Paradis—An Ice Couloir—Impressive View—The North Ridge of the Grand Paradis—A Glorious Day. 1881—Coupé de Monei—Mont Herbetet by East Ridge; a fine climb—A Wild Bivouac—The Grivola from the Col de Belleface—A Splendid Chimney—Punta di Gaÿ from the Col de Grandcroux—Roccia Viva—Noasca—Ceresole—Viper—The Punta Foura—Eastern Levanna—Col du Charforon—Courmayeur—Bad Weather—Col de Miage—Aiguille du Chardonnet.

THAT to have been defeated on the easy side of a mountain is an excellent reason for trying a more difficult route to its summit will be granted by all mountaineers. A dismal retreat from the Val Savaranche side of the Grand Paradis in 1878 was the cause of my arrival at Cogne with Alphonse Payot, of Chamonix, on August 3, 1879, with the intention of traversing the monarch

of the Graians from the Valnontey to Ceresole.

As we strolled into the village on a lovely evening we were so much taken by the views of the splendid cirque of ice, snow and rock which closes the southern end of the Valnontey, that I decided on making the Pointe de Ceresole or Pic de la Lune (12,379 feet) the object of our first expedition.

Accordingly on the following afternoon, taking with us Léon Guichardaz as porter, we started for a chalet on the cliffs above the Valnontey. We had hardly crossed the Cogne meadows when we were compelled to take shelter from a thunderstorm which came up from Noasca, and with its black clouds caused the snows of the Grandcroux to assume an unearthly whiteness. Happily the rain soon ceased, and we resumed our way. The last reaches of the valley were splendid with rhododendron; and when, almost at the foot of the moraine, we began to climb the slopes on our right,

the flowers were unusually bright and abundant. The place was like a garden, as Payot remarked. From our chalet we enjoyed a fine view of the greater icefall of the Tribulation Glacier, as well as of the Grandcroux ; above them the Tête de la Tribulation glistened in the uncertain glory of the sunshine, and was set off by the dark vault of clouds to the south, seemingly charged with rain and thunder. As we looked down the valley we caught a glimpse of some chalets on the mountains beyond Cogne, with the silver streak of a falling stream, and a dark pinnacle of rock rising proudly on their left.

On the morrow we climbed our peak. Mounting by the buttress of rock between the two icefalls of the Tribulation Glacier, we crossed the ice towards the Col Chamonin, the monotony of our journey being broken by the disappearance of Payot's hat into a crevasse, and its recovery therefrom by a clever descent of Payot

himself to the full length of our rope. We reached the summit from the south-west, the last fifteen minutes affording us some amusement in a chimney, though we met with no real difficulty. A few feet below the summit on the Noasca side we found two fine plants of *Ranunculas glacialis* in full blossom. We returned by the same route, and from the rocks between the icefalls enjoyed a striking view of Cogne and its green meadows in bright sunshine, and the Valnontey in shade.

On August 7 we ascended the Ondezana —a charming excursion, most strongly to be recommended. When the lower part of the Valeille has been passed the scenery becomes interesting, and the climbing equally so, without presenting any serious difficulties. On our way up we saw several bouquetins, including a young one, a most graceful little creature, which ran along with easy confidence between two of its full-grown companions.

The view from the south-western ridge of our mountain was superb, and that from the summit even surpassed it. The Pennine Alps were well seen; to the west the mass of the Tour St Pierre rose grandly above us; to the east we looked down upon part of the great 'river-sundered champaign,' with its many streams; to the south the Val Piantonetto wore a garment of snow, which made the splintered crags and black escarpment of the mountains between it and the Val Soana look by contrast more than usually savage; and our eyes swept every peak from the Viso to the Charforon. And this we enjoyed under a sky of perfect azure, save where, to the east, diaphanous cloudlets of delicate pink made the blue yet lovelier by contrast. After spending nearly two hours on the top, we descended for the most part by our morning's route. The basin of the Glacier de Valeille was this year very fine, there being between the Ondezana

and the Pointe de Sengies no less than ten snow-couloirs, in most of which the snow thinned out into the most exquisite lacework.

On the 9th we ascended the Grand Sertz (11,516 feet) from the Col de l'Herbetet, and descended, in part by glissades, across the glacier to the Col de Lauzon route just above the 'campement du roi.' We encountered a cold wind, which made the summit an undesirable resting-place, though we found shelter under the huge flat stone which forms the actual top, and, projecting over the snow on the east, forms a by no means despicable refuge. The pastures near the royal hunting encampment were brilliant with flowers, whose subtle fragrance and delicate colouring lent to the warm sunshine an additional charm. The slopes were especially rich in great yellow anemones, many of which raised their heads through the melting snow. Our descent by the pleasant path was easy and rapid, and

at 1.20 p.m. we got back to Cogne, from which we had started at 1.50 a.m.

The same evening the Messrs Pasteur arrived for the ascènt of the Grivola, and added a little very welcome animation to life at Cogne. Other visitors, too, not so welcome, took up their quarters the same night at the rival hostelry of those days, the Hôtel Royal, two Austrian archdukes, who, we were informed, had received permission from the King of Italy to kill *one* bouquetin each. They, we discovered to our horror, were going to beat the Valnontey on Monday, and we wanted to sleep out above it on the Sunday night for the Grand Paradis; but when I sent Payot to see whether we should do any harm by carrying out our plan, to our intense relief the 'garde chef' answered in the negative.

On Sunday morning the whole village was alive. There were many 'garde-chasses' in uniform, and much people from surrounding hamlets came to have a long chat, and



COGNE PEASANT WOMEN IN FEAST-DAY DRESS.

afterwards hear mass. At least every third person had a basket or hat full of cherries, and many wore bunches of mountain pansies. I regret that ignorance of technical terms prevents me from describing the dress of the women. Its general effect is to render it no easy matter to distinguish between the maiden of fifteen and the matron of fifty.

I was sorry to leave the little inn at Cogne, for though not quite the place to revel and domineer, it afforded very tolerable fare. The hillsides and the meadows near offer great choice of sunny or shady spots whereon to dream away a lazy day; and if anyone, not satisfied with nature, craves for sentiment, let him take up *The Court of Philip Augustus*, to be found in the dining-room, a chaste compound of the erotic and the tearful. Truly the modish Cupid of the author's time must have been 'intense' enough to satisfy even the æsthetes of our day.

In the afternoon we walked up the Valnontey to a chalet on the route of the Col de l'Herbetet, some distance above our former sleeping-place. The view was beautiful, and we had the pleasure of seeing a noble bouquetin grazing quietly a few yards from the chalet.

We were up betimes, and got off at 1.40. For the first three-quarters of an hour we followed the route of the Col de l'Herbetet, and then, turning to the left, crossed the ridge descending from the Mont Herbetet. At 4.6 we breakfasted, and before we started again at 4.27 the sun rose with beautiful colour effects. Hitherto the moon had befriended us. When we had crossed the Dzasset Glacier we came to the edge of the cliffs that separate it from the Plan de la Tribulation—and this seems the place for a short explanation of how, after reading Mr Barlow's account of M. Frassy's adventures, I came to find myself in the same predicament as the latter. When we were descend-

ing from the Pointe de Ceresole (for which we had slept out, in order to have plenty of time for examination) we had discussed the possibility of reaching the Tribulation Glacier from the chalet without descending into the valley. Opinions differed: Guichardaz was sanguine; Payot very doubtful; I altogether incredulous. When I found the direction we were taking after the first half-hour, it was easy, with the Alpine Club map in my hands, to prophesy that we should have a great wall of cliff to descend. Presently we arrived at the top of the wall, which certainly looked formidable, though I had small doubt but that Payot would find a way down. Let me say here that he showed on this expedition all the qualities of a first-rate guide, and I must add that Guichardaz walked well, and was invariably good-natured and obliging.

For a short time we kept along the face of the wall, on which *Ranunculus glacialis* grew luxuriantly, descending very slightly, and

helped by the track of a bouquetin till we reached a couloir, which Payot pronounced practicable, so down it we went. It was not easy, and Payot paid it the unusual compliment of calling to the porter, 'Par ici il faut faire attention.' We gained the Plan de la Tribulation at 6.45 by a long drop.

The glacier proved easy, and a steep snow-slope brought us to some rocks, and these to the great snow-slope which forms the eastern face of the Petit Paradis. Of course we should naturally have turned to the left on reaching the level of the summit ridge, but when I saw the Petit Paradis within our grasp, I told Payot to walk straight up, and so at 9.33 we reached the top, having met with no difficulties since our escape from the couloir.

It will be remembered that M. Frassy reached this Pointe so late in the day that he had to descend to Val Savaranche at once, and, in fact, spent the night on the ice; but luckily we had plenty of time, and



THE GRAND PARADIS AND PETIT PARADIS FROM THE BECCA DI NOASCHETTA.

Payot confided to me afterwards that he had seen that we should arrive, as he phrased it, on the Paradis. After a few minutes on the top we retraced our steps for some distance, and then turned to the right. We were now on the Val Savaranche side of the Grand Paradis. In front of us were some repulsive-looking rocks, which, on close acquaintance, turned out to be fringed with icicles, and in parts rotten. We passed below these, and reached a very steep ice-couloir which separated them from another patch of rocks. Here Payot and I changed axes, as mine was sharper than his; and after a reminder from our leader of the necessity to 'faire attention,' he began to cut steps across. I now had leisure, when I had chipped a good hold in the ice for my left hand, to look down to the Val Savaranche, and a very impressive look it was; we seemed to be clinging to a great white wall, and I saw straight down for some 7000 feet. The couloir once crossed—a few steps, and we

were on the arête, and victory was certain. After this we met with no troubles; the air was windless; the beautiful snow-ridge gave us a pathway, the views from which were of entrancing splendour, and with one or two halts to enjoy such sights as, though they cannot be described, will be ever unforgotten, we walked straight up to the summit. There (at 11.46) we stood in perfect weather, 'girdled by the gleaming world.' After Payot and I had exchanged congratulations, we descended to some rocks a little below on the south, and attacked the provisions. After our meal I returned to the top, and delighted myself with the view. From Monte Rosa to the Viso there were no clouds, and the great peaks made an indelible impression on my memory, but Italy was a grey sea of vapour.[1]

[1] I afterwards discovered from the visitors' book at the Hôtel Royal, Courmayeur, that Herr Javelle had (in 1876) anticipated us in ascending the Grand Paradis by its northern ridge. He speaks enthusiastically of the ascent, comparing it to that of the Weisshorn and Dent Blanche. The new survey makes the height 4061 mètres = 13,324 feet.

We left at 1 p.m., and crossed the Col du Mont Corvé and Colle della Torre without adventure. We found snow lying far down into the basin of Broglio—indeed, considerably below it; and where last year we had seen herds of cattle the herbage still wore its winter mantle of white. When some way down we entered a mist, and then looking back at the Becca di Monciair and Punta del Broglio, we saw a lovely sight. On high a strong wind was blowing, and a pale golden cloud was being driven across the sky, when suddenly, as we gazed, from every spire and pinnacle of rock—

> 'There streamed a sunlit vapour, like the standard
> Of some ethereal host,'

while above them the sky was deep blue. The change was startling, and seemed to us in the misty basin so far below almost supernatural.

The mist subsequently gave us great trouble, and we did not reach the Stabilimento till 8.53 p.m., after accomplishing, to

our great satisfaction, the first passage of the Grand Paradis from Cogne to Ceresole.

On July 31, 1881, Mr G. P. Baker and I arrived at Cogne with the guides Ulrich Almer and Johann Jossi. We began our campaign by crossing the Coupé de Monei, or Colle del Gran San Pietro (11,096 feet), from the Valnontey to the Valeille; ours being, it would appear, the first passage. The ice scenery of the Glacier de Monei was fine, the crevasses numerous and large enough to give some trouble; and once or twice the ice cracked with such loud reports as to suggest that a chasm might open before our eyes. On the Col, on the Valeille side, we found quite a little garden of Alpine plants, similar to one which Payot and I discovered on the rocks just above the Col de l'Herbetet on our ascent of the Grand Sertz two years before. We did not try the descent from the actual Col, as, though doubtless practicable, it seemed dangerous, owing to

a great mass of overhanging snow and ice, but after taking to the rocks on the north and descending a little, got into a couloir on the Valeille side. The snow was in first-rate order, and we glissaded, slipped and floundered for about a thousand feet in a few minutes, with roars of laughter as first one and then another subsided into the trough of the couloir. The walk to Cogne was uneventful. How beautiful this valley must once have been, one splendid pine, towering all alone in the midst of its desolation, feelingly brought home to us.

The night of August 2, after the usual interview with a splendid bouquetin, we spent at the chalet on the route of the Col de l'Herbetet, at which Payot and I had bivouacked before our ascent of the Grand Paradis in 1879. The scene as the moon rose was of great beauty. Its finest feature was the snowy curve of the Cresta Gastaldi, and the dark rocks and glorious northern ridge of the Grand Paradis; though to us

the serrated pyramid of the morrow's peak was more immediately interesting.

We reached the eastern arête at 6.15 without any trouble, and then followed it to the summit. In parts the ascent was difficult. We climbed almost entirely over rocks, only one or two patches of ice and snow being met with in the hollow between one pinnacle and another. The character of the rocks, which at the bottom were very loose and rotten, changed after some time, and we found good hold; then again we came upon a zone of rottenness, which gave place near the summit to rocks which pleased us. As we ascended, the scenery on our left was magnificent, the ridge being much broken and weather-worn, and overlooking chasms and precipices of the most savage splendour. We found the rocks free from ice, and the ascent (which Almer compared to that of the Zermatt Rothhorn) sufficiently exciting to be most enjoyable. The summit (12,396 feet) commanded a view of nearly the

whole chain of the Alps from Monte Rosa to Dauphiné.[1]

Whilst at Cogne we had much pleasant conversation with Signor Paganini, of the Instituto Topografico Militare, who was engaged in surveying the Cogne Mountains for the new Italian Survey, which has since been published. To his courtesy we were indebted for a sight of the very interesting collection of photographs which he had already taken. These comprise general views of the chain of the Grand Paradis from different sides. Most of them were beautifully clear, and rendered the orography of the Eastern Graians quite easy to understand. We had also to thank him for much general information about this district and the Val d'Orco.

On the morning of the 5th we walked down to Vièyes, where we found excellent wine and bread and cheese at the little

[1] The only previous ascent was made in 1873 from the Col de l'Herbetet by Signor Barale.

cantine (du Voyageur des Alpes) on the right-hand side of the road in descending from Cogne. After lunch we mounted by the path nearly opposite the cantine, leading to the Col de Belleface. We enjoyed some lovely sights on our way; the lower glacier of the Grivola, with the torrent descending from it framed in by pines, being especially striking, as also was the view of the Val d'Aosta, from vineyards, cornfields and meadows to bare slopes and summits, with the Vélan and Grand Combin towering in the background. At times the Nomenon's rugged head, looking almost as fierce as the Dru, demanded our admiration, as also did the marvellously jagged rocks of the Monte Ruje (10,409), his northern neighbour. The Grivola's north-eastern rock ridge, the beautiful northern snow arête followed by Mr Pendlebury's party and the route which we proposed to try were all well seen by us. We passed several groups of chalets, but the last, at which Mr Pendlebury's party, who

were fortunate enough to find them untenanted, slept in 1876, were so unsavoury after the fragrance of the pines and flowers, that though we had purposed passing the night there, we decided to push on. We found a sleeping-place by the side of a rock, not very far from the Col de Belleface, in full view of the morrow's work. Our camp in this desolate combe commanded a scene of wild grandeur. On one side was the Grivola, with its glaciers high up above the bare ice-worn cliffs; in front, the Col de Belleface, a wilderness of stones, the actual ridge consisting of fantastic pinnacles of ochre-coloured rocks, and rising on the north in shattered spires, columns and towers to the summit of the Nomenon (11,443). This strange mass, with its numerous bastions of rock, looked like a huge irregular fortification battered and weatherworn, of which the Nomenon himself formed the silent and deserted keep.

At 3.1 a.m. we left our camping-place

and Léon Guichardaz, whom we had taken as porter, and who quite came out on the previous evening when we drew him on to tell us his Crimean experiences, and went up the rocks a little to the left of the actual Col de Belleface; and when we had attained the ridge which runs down from the Grivola to this pass we kept along it. The rocks as we advanced became difficult, and it took us two hours to ascend 750 feet. In one or two places we had to retreat for a short distance and try a cast round to the left, but Almer was equal to the occasion. The rock itself was excellent, but had been so planed down by the ice of past years as to give but little hold for the feet. After these rocks we came to the precipitous shoulder so conspicuous in the view of the Grivola from Pont d'Ael. This was the critical point in the expedition. We had seen for some time a narrow chimney in the rock, and wondered whether Almer would take to it. He did so, and after an exciting scramble we reached

the top. Time, 9.35. This chimney, the height of which by aneroid was 200 feet, took us 1 hr. 10 mins. to climb. We were fortunate enough to find it free from ice, there being only one block jammed between the sides, in which two steps were cut. Shortly after we quitted the chimney we reached the head of a vast chasm opening down into the Val Savaranche, and backed by a barrier of snow, where we found water, and so stayed for a second meal. Hence to the top we mounted by alternate rocks and steep ice and snow-slopes, our toil being at times relieved by glorious views down the savage walls into the Val Savaranche, and across to Mont Blanc, who never loses his splendour when seen from the Graians. The actual summit was reached at 12.8 p.m. Baker now pronounces our climb quite equal to that of the Shreckhorn by the north-east ridge. We descended to Cogne by the usual route, mounting once to the north-east arête for a view of its northern slope. The tedium

of our tramp across the Glacier de Trajo was broken by my disappearance, through carelessness, into a masked crevasse, from which, thanks to the rope, I was hauled up without hurt, but as well powdered with snow as Father Christmas himself.

The next two days we spent at Cogne. Sunday was a very busy day with the villagers, as there was high mass, preceded by a procession with singing through the main street to the church. Moreover, one of the Alpine companies of the Italian army arrived in the afternoon from the Fenêtre de Cogne. The men looked strong and soldierly, and the officers were very fine fellows. In the evening, after dinner, the regimental musicians 'served in their harmony' to the delight of the village.

Altogether, Cogne was unusually lively. To add to the excitement, the King was expected in a few days for chamois and bouquetin hunting, and garde-chasses from

the neighbouring districts had assembled for the great occasion.

The walls were placarded with loyal welcomes, some of an antique grandiloquence which, though—

> 'Never anything can be amiss
> When simpleness and duty tender it,'

afforded considerable amusement to a sober mind.

On Monday, August 9, we left Cogne at 1.45 a.m., and reached the Col de Grandcroux in a little under seven hours' actual walking, having saved considerable time by avoiding the séracs. On our way we examined the Col between the Punta di Gaÿ and Roccia Viva, which had not yet been crossed, and of which we were anxious to make the first passage. It was plain that falling stones raked the route which would have to be followed, and, moreover, an avalanche of them descended before our eyes,

so we decided to give up the attempt as unjustifiably dangerous.[1]

From the Col de Grandcroux we ascended the Punta de Gaÿ (11,887), a bold and steep wall of rock, with a lovely little crown of snow for its summit. We climbed direct from the ridge of the Col entirely by the rocks, which in one or two places were decidedly difficult. I remember one place especially which was very steep and without good hold, where Almer found some trouble. The summit was charming. We returned by descending the Gaÿ Glacier for some distance, and then traversing easy rocks to the Col, the route followed by S. Vaccarone's party when they made the first ascent of the peak.

We then went down to the chalet of La Motta, where we found a porter with blankets and provisions from Ceresole awaiting us. Our plan had been to bivouac somewhere near

[1] Now known as Colle Baretti; crossed by S. Vallino's party, and described by him in Boll, C.A.I., No. 53.



THE PUNTA DI GAY, FROM THE SOUTH-WEST.

the chalet, and then climb the west peak of the Roccia Viva (probably over 12,000) on the morrow. To my great chagrin I was prevented from taking part in this expedition owing to a sharp attack of neuralgia, so I left the others and made my way to Noasca. The next day was gloriously fine, and Baker describes the view as superb, the rivers in the Italian plain being quite distinctly seen. The ascent was not difficult, but considerable danger was incurred from falling stones.

At early morning from clean-cut ridge or eastward-opening glen you may realise the truth of Mr Newbolt's beautiful words—

> 'And now he saw with lifted eyes
> The East like a great chancel rise,
> And deep through all his senses drawn
> Received the sacred wine of dawn.'

At noon, perched on some lonely pinnacle or silver spear, you may drink in sleepily visions of colour, vastness and sublimity which will dwell with you for a lifetime. My lonely walk to Noasca was, in its own way,

hardly less impressive. The faint moonlight, that with difficulty kept the darkness at bay, enhanced the sombre size of cliff and crag; and many streams at a distance made a mellow murmur like the recurring memory of a toilsome but victorious day.

I found the little inn at Noasca, though poor, clean; and I think I may say:—

'Though their cates be mean, take them in good part;
Better cheer may you have, but not with better heart.'

Next morning in lovely weather I strolled up to Ceresole, where Baker and the guides joined me in the evening.

At the Stabilimento we spent some very pleasant days. The house had been improved by the addition of a large salle à manger, and a dependence has been built at a little distance off on the Locana path. We soon made friends with the Italian visitors, whom we have to thank for much kindly courtesy. A barrel-organ in the salon contributed much to our amusement.

This 'slave of music' played dance tunes, and a bout was tried most evenings. On one famous occasion, a soldier in attendance on our friend the engineer in charge of the new survey, and the cook in his professional attire, went through a Milanese national dance, to the chaste music of the organ turned by the waiter, who was also in official costume.

On one of our lazy days Baker killed a viper and brought it home. The evil beast caused much alarm to the ladies, who were with difficulty induced to believe that it was dead, and inquired anxiously after its interment. I explained to them that we had felt it our duty, in accordance with the accepted habits of Englishmen, to kill something as the day was so fine. I regret that neither of us was scientific enough to give the viper's proper name. It was killed near the great waterfall. In connection with the waterfall I may mention, that from the bridge near the mineral spring there is a most glorious

view of the tumbling Orco, forest-framed, with the towers of the Levannetta and the Eastern Levanna rising proudly behind.

On August 12 we ascended the Punta Foura (11,188). It says much for the general accuracy of the Alpine Club map, that even in the dim light of early morning we were able to hit off the right track. I consulted the map behind a huge rock, sheltered in front by the rest of the party, and lighted by a match held by Jossi with much judgment. Some doubts as to whether we were really in the proper path having seized us, we hurried to our left across a meadow to Ciapini Sopra, where we found a garde-chasse about to start on his rounds. He, with much civility, pointed out our route, and, after a somewhat chilly libation to his courtesy, in which he shared, we rejoined our former track. On our way up the valley we had seen several peasants at work reaping even at that early hour. When we drew near to our peak we were able to dis-



THE EASTERN LEVANNA, LEVANNETTA, AND CENTRAL LEVANNA FROM CERESOLE.

tinguish it with ease, owing to the great window from which it takes its name. I should add that there is a Monte Forato, so called from a similar window, in the Apennines.[1]

We climbed the mountain by its main (northern) ridge, on which above us in the sunshine, with a sort of nimbus round his head, we saw a noble bouquetin. The actual summit afforded us some amusement, as it consisted of a rock separated from the ridge by a chasm. This rock immediately above the window, having been pronounced by Almer to be two feet higher than the arête on which we were standing, was climbed with some little difficulty by the whole party. The view was very good.

On the 15th we ascended the Levanna Orientale (11,693) by its eastern arête. The forest by moonlight was lovely, though we contrived to lose our way in it. And a little later, as—

[1] *Alpine Journal*, Vol. VII. p. 379

'The maiden splendours of the morning star
Shook in the steadfast blue,'

the prospect we enjoyed was of the most perfect character. The views as we climbed along the arête were also superb, and that from the summit a fitting crown to them. Chalets and single trees were perfectly distinct; the sky was azure; the Orco shone with a subdued silveriness as in a picture, and even the awning of the Stabilimento was distinctly seen. We saw, too, a part of the great Italian plain with its rivers, as well as a lake, which we conjectured to be the Lago de Viverone, away to the east. The Maritime, Cottian and Dauphiné Alps were also well seen, as well as the nearer peaks, notably the noble Ciamarella.

The little village of Forno, in the Valle Grande, was most beautiful. A network of streams, green trees, greener meadows, little plots of yellow corn, the village itself in the sun, the convent at the entrance to the Stura di Séa folded in great trees, composed a

perfect picture. Farther down the valley more meadows, woods and corn-plots vied with the beauties of Forno. Altogether the view offered a combination of Italian softness on the one hand, and stern grandeur on the other, seldom to be met with.

This expedition is strongly recommended. The mountain can be easily taken from the Stabilimento, and if it were necessary our times could be improved upon. The scenery as we saw it was perhaps unusually imposing owing to new snow. On our way down we had an amusing scramble through a sort of window in the ridge which Almer had avoided in the ascent.

On August 18 we effected a pass[1] (10,929, estimate) between the Charforon and the Becca de Monciair, now known as Col de Charforon. I had already crossed the Col du Moncorvé several times, and found this

[1] This pass was crossed by Signor Frasca in August 1880. Boll, No. 44, p. 606. He seems to have met with difficulties so much more serious than anything we encountered that I think our routes must have been different.

pass an agreeable change. Before we reached the little glacier immediately under our pass, we enjoyed some lovely views of Val d'Orco with glorious colour effects. From the ridge itself, which we gained through a delicately-fringed cornice of snow, we saw once more a great part of the Italian plain, and mountain ranges innumerable.

The descent was effected by the Monciair Glacier over steep ice and snow, in the teeth of a biting wind. We passed one chasm in the ice whose azure deeps and icicles, with 'diamond work of subtlest jewelry,' caused us to pause in wonder, notwithstanding the cold. We were soon clear of the ice, and in the track for the chalets of Moncorvé. On our way down the Val Savaranche we suddenly came upon a view of the Grivola such as I have never seen equalled. The new snow on the mountain's rocky forehead shone in the sunlight above the massive walls and noble forests like an iceberg enamelled with warm gold.



THE GRIVOLA, FROM THE SOUTH.

At Val Savaranche, where we found a company of Alpine artillery, we loitered so long that we had to hurry our march to the Val d'Aosta, and in consequence reached Villeneuve, notwithstanding the darkness, in less than three hours. There we passed the night, and on the morrow took a carriage to Courmayeur.

Perhaps the rain which so persistently pursued us in the Mont Blanc range makes us look back with too partial an eye to our wanderings in the Graians, but it would be difficult to meet with more enjoyable climbing than we were fortunate enough to find during our stay at Cogne. Thanks to Almer's excellent guiding, to the courtesy which we everywhere met with, to the charming weather, which transformed a bivouac in the open air from a discomfort to a pleasure, but, above all, to the perfect naturalness of the district, our memories of the noblest of Italian Alps are as warm and bright as one of the lovely sunsets which

crowned the delightful days we spent amongst them. May like happiness befall future travellers.

In the Mont Blanc chain rain annoyed us unmercifully. We went to the Cantine de la Vizaille with ambitious projects in our heads, but a passage of the Col de Miage—starting after eight in the morning—was all we accomplished. On the Chamonix side of the Col we had one little excitement. We had started to run across a cliff down which it looked as if stones might fall. Ulrich led, I was next him, Baker followed me, and Jossi brought up the rear. Hardly had we started when I was pulled up suddenly. A stream in which I was now fixed poured over my shoulders. I could not go forward, for Baker was pulling hard; I could not go back, for Ulrich was doing the same. Ulrich shouted to know why I did not come on, and wondered why I had taken so sudden a fancy for a bath. It was difficult for me to see what was going on, but I kept a steady pull

on the rope between me and Baker. Presently it gave and on I went as hard as I could. When we had cleared the cliff explanations followed. A rock had turned over suddenly and imprisoned Baker's foot, and so I learnt at close quarters with what unvarying regularity streams play their watery tasks. It was almost equal to an introduction to Alpheus and Arethusa.

Our time was now drawing to a close. Baker had to return to England, and I was left with the guides for two days more. We decided to climb the Aiguille du Chardonnet and so see the eastern end of the Mont Blanc chain, if the weather would allow us. Our chances of success seemed small, but we ventured up to the little chalet inn at Lognan, and were rewarded next morning by a perfect day.

A few yards from the summit we passed carefully over a very narrow edge of snow with a cornice on the right. I pushed my axe through the cornice, and when I with-

drew it through the little rift which it had made I had a startling glimpse of the glacier hundreds of feet below. I then recollected the picture of the same place in Mr Fowler's account of the first ascent of the peak in the *Alpine Journal.*

What I saw from the summit I can still see. Round me rise the great mountains and—

> 'The stainless sky
> Opens beyond them like eternity.'

There was no misery of rain, no vexation of mist, no buffeting of wind. The weather's o'erpassionate mood was past; the quiet time was breathless in the rapture of the sunshine.

On our descent some excitement was caused on the bridge over the bergschrund as our leader Jossi's one leg disappeared through the arch, but wary walking took us over in safety. It was dusk when we crossed the main glacier, but Ulrich found the way admirably, while I had many opportunities,

when perched on sharp edges of ice, for studying the dark and awesome hollows below me. The landlord thoughtfully sent a man from Lognan with a lantern, which proved a great help.

The next day the weather again lost its temper, and we reached Martigny wet to the skin. At the Hôtel Clerc I was received with compassionate smiles, and consoled by the prompt production of my portmanteau and a comfortable bath. Before dinner was over the fascinating memory of the view from the Chardonnet had banished all thought of the paltry discomforts of our walk from Argentière. So soon is equanimity recovered in the mountains.



CHAPTER III

1882—A Lost Guide—The Pointe de la Cisetta—No Porters—The Torre di Lavina—Val Campiglia—Ronco—A Glorious Day—Val d'Engio—Locana—Ceresole—The Levannetta—A Day with an Alpine Company—A Sham Fight—A Change of Rooms—Italian Courtesy. 1883—The Nomenon from the Col de Mesoncles—A Cold Bedroom—The Grande Arolla—Col de la Muraille Rouge—The Punta Forzo—The Fenêtre de Dzasset—Gran Neiron Col—Alpine Plants—Forty Chamois—A Paradise of Flowers—The Roisebanque—Ronco—Ceresole—The Tresenta—The Bocchetta Goj.

To turn out on a rainy night with a somnolent native and flickering lantern to search for one's guide—such was my first expedition at Cogne in 1882. I had engaged by mistake an old Val Tournanche man, who had in the early Matterhorn days been a first-rate climber, but owing to an accident was now quite unfit for work. He had walked up with our party of four from Aimaville on a beautiful evening, but after

we left Vièyes rain came on, and I had hurried forward to rouse the good people of the Hôtel de la Grivola. When my friends arrived, they, with the disinterested volubility of the irresponsible, reported the guide as left behind—lost or drowned—and as it was within the range of possibility that he had met with a serious accident there was nothing for it but to turn out and look for him. Luckily, we found him before we had gone far. I had asked my friend M. Vernet, the excellent landlord of the Hôtel du Mont Blanc at Aosta, to telegraph for Henri Séraphin from Courmayeur. He arrived the next day.

On July 31, with the Rev. G. Trundle, we made the first ascent of the Pointe de la Cisetta (11,073 feet), the peak immediately to the north of the Patri. The mountain is effective for its size, and its precipices on the Valeille side are imposing. We got down the upper part of the wall with ease, but found ourselves cut off by a sheer

rock-face, and had to return to the summit ridge and descend by a col to the north of the peak.

The next day 'le vieux' was paid off, and it was decided that my friends should cross the Col de Bardoney to Ronco, whilst Séraphin and I sought the same place *via* the Torre di Lavina (10,854). Great was the task my friends had to find a porter. Nearly the whole male population of Cogne was paraded before a man could be found willing to go for a reasonable price. Baker and I had a similar difficulty in 1881 in getting a man to take a knapsack to Ceresole. It is strange that, though since the closing of the iron mines the Cogne peasant is so poor, he is so little inclined to accept the chance of earning a day's good wages. One of the younger men who declined told Séraphin afterwards that he was sorry he had done so. At last a man was found, but in the morning, having had a bottle of wine given him at breakfast, he

was rendered altogether incapable, and caused much annoyance and delay.

When Séraphin and I reached the Col de Bardoney, having had to take shelter from the rain on our way, the Lavina was hidden in clouds, so we breakfasted and decided to give up the peak. But when we had descended some little distance the weather improved, so we made a long traverse to our left and eventually reached the summit without any difficulty whatever. The views we enjoyed, though somewhat narrowed by the clouds, were of 'inconceivable perfection and changefulness.' We went down to Ronco by the Val Campiglia, a delightful walk. At the first chalet (Rancio) we saw the biggest dog I have ever come across in the Alps, a splendid creature, with a chest as massive as a rock and voice to match. The bottom of the valley had been ravaged by the torrent, owing to a terrific storm in the early summer, and presented a sad spectacle of the tremendously

destructive force of even a small stream. In some places we had to walk in the bed of the torrent, the track having been utterly swept away. A peasant at Campiglia told us that four hours' rain had caused all the destruction. After the morning's mist and rain, the balmy evening air as we drew near to Ronco was delightful. We found very fair quarters at the inn kept by Carlo Ferraris. My friends did not arrive till very late, owing to troubles with their porter.

Ronco is a beautiful place. Forest and corn-plot, river and meadow, picturesque hamlet and bold rock pinnacles, make up a charming picture. We spent a pleasant day of idleness on the 3rd, and on the 4th Séraphin and I started for the Punta Lazin, leaving our friends to seek Ceresole by way of Ponte. As we left Ronco there was the same undefined fragrance in the air as we had noticed on the evening of our arrival, and it added largely to our enjoyment of the scenery. Our route lead us up the Val

Lazin, which we entered (after passing the convent) by a steep path, leading past a lovely little stream with cascades above a hazel copse. We passed a chalet or two. At one the shepherd was very friendly in his offer of refreshments, indeed the disinterested hospitality of the shepherds and herdsmen is one of the charms of these out-of-the-way valleys. We continued to keep to the right, passed a lake, and gaining at last a very easy crest walked up to its highest point, which was afterwards named Monte Meialot, but this ridge is most perplexing.

After a meal of a pleasanter type than usual, as we had pears and excellent peaches, which had been brought up from Ponte to Ronco the previous evening, I left Séraphin to repose and began to examine the view. Its great feature was the noble outline of the Tour St Pierre; but its chief charm was the great plain with the Viso and the Maritime Alps, the loveliest of blues with pink clouds over them; indeed, of all the beautiful days,

and I could count many, I have enjoyed in the Graians, this was perhaps the most beautiful. There was in the air an incomparable softness, and in the sky and slowly-floating clouds an exquisite tenderness of colouring, which had all the subtle delicacy of a spring flower. Truly the Italian sun is a mighty 'inventor of harmonies.' As for the view across the plain, it is one of those memories which kindle again and again one's enthusiasm for these mountains.

An hour and three-quarters passed all too soon and it was time to go, so we descended along the crest and then over abominable 'roches moutonnées,' of which we had had quite enough in the Val Lazin, into the wild Val d'Eugio. 'Très sauvage avec beaucoup des pierres,' to quote Séraphin's description. The walk was monotonous, but when we reached the hamlet, which is perched at a great height above the Val d'Orco, it became more interesting. Séraphin, whose handsome face and ability to converse in all

manner of patois always ensure him a favourable reception from the mountain maidens, inquired for the straightest track for the valley. A handsome girl with sparkling eyes came with us a little distance in order to point out where we were to go, jumping blithely over the stones with shoeless feet. The valley was further off than it looked, but the latter part of the descent through chestnut trees was agreeable enough. When we got to the road, a reference to our watches and the answers of a peasant as to the distance to Noasca decided us to turn to Locana. Nowhere do streams seem so cool, nowhere does water foam with so enticing a sound, as in the Val d'Orco, because nowhere is one hotter after a day's march, but, in the absence of towels, I restrained myself. We spent the night at the 'Tre Pernici,' where I found fair entertainment and a clean bed, though the exterior and the entrance prophesied utter woe. There is quite a comfortable verandah on

the side of the house away from the street, covered with vines. On the morrow we walked up to Ceresole and rejoined our companions.

Pleasant as I have always found the Stabilimento, this year it was unusually so. We soon became great friends with the Italian visitors, and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. On August 7, the Rev. G. Trundle and Blanchetti joined us in an attempt on the Levannetta (11,279 feet). Starting from Ceresole is always associated in my mind with bright starlight, and this morning was no exception. We climbed the mountain mainly by its eastern arête in charming weather, and were gratified to find that our ascent was, as we had expected, the first. The climb is much easier than the look of the peak would lead one to anticipate. The top is a huge rock cleft in twain, which Blanchetti mounted with comparative ease, followed by Séraphin ; Trundle and I came after, with the help of the rope and a good

deal of miscellaneous hauling. The glacier on the French side seemed within a stone's throw, and the view was good, though, of course, not equal to that from the Eastern or Central Levannas. The guides at lunch amused us with an account of the dismal fate which had been prophesied for us, especially for me. We had had an impromptu dance the previous evening, the trumpeters of an Alpine company supplying the music, and had not broken up till eleven. We had been roused at 12.30 (Séraphin stayed up to make sure that breakfast was ready for us), and it had been decided that dancing at night and climbing in the morning were incompatible. We were amused to find ourselves supporting the mad character of the wandering Englishman. We slightly varied our route in the descent, and thus came upon the only troublesome place of the day. Trundle and I were on a sloping rock resembling a house-roof, Séraphin was on the chimney above, and Blanchetti on the wall

below, seeking to find a way down. The difficulty consisted in the fact that when we had let go of the roof we had to change our direction, and, after one step on the wall, to turn to another wall on our right. Luckily a hole was found in which the axes could be stuck and time saved. The place was not really difficult, and was the only one which gave us any trouble, though the loose stones immediately under the rocks of the summit had annoyed us considerably.

My friends left by the Col de la Croix de Nivolet, and as one of the party was unwell they took two mules, one for riding and one for the baggage. But dire were the troubles which befell them. First the baggage mule kicked out in such style that he was allowed by the owner to travel at his own pace and pleasure. Fired by this vicious example, the other brute grew unmanageable. Then the one muleteer became *très malade*, and lay on his stomach by the trackside for a quarter of an hour at a time. Finally, exhortations and

threats notwithstanding, the party did not reach Villeneuve till late in the afternoon after starting at 11.30 the previous evening.

One day after my friends had gone I accompanied an officer and company of soldiers in a visit to the Colle della Piccola. The pace for the first half-hour was tremendous, but afterwards the walk was most enjoyable. We climbed to the notch behind a conspicuous snow-slope nearer the Levanna Orientale than the actual Col, and then worked round to the Piccola on the Forno side. The men seemed full of spirits, and walked remarkably well. On the way one of them caught a bird, and at a chalet which we passed there was an amusing sight—five men eating their bread and milk out of the same pot. The slope on the Forno side was blue with forget-me-nots, and great were the bouquets carried down to the Stabilimento.

On another morning there was a sham fight, the attacking force coming from the direction of the Col de la Galise, while the

defenders took post near the church (some distance above the Stabilimento). The sight was picturesque, as may easily be imagined. The angry puffs of smoke from between the pines and the walls of the hamlet immediately under the church, and the continually changing movements of the defenders made the mimic battle vivid enough. The assailants having carried the church wall, near which the ladies and the rest of us were standing, peace was declared, and we adjourned to breakfast.

As a proof of the warm kindness of my Italian friends, I mention the following incident. I did not like my room, and told the landlord I wished to change it, but that he was not to remove anything till a new room had been approved. On coming in early one morning I found my walls plentifully adorned with ladies' garments, and my goods transferred to the worst room in the old house—one above the kitchen, which the heat and fumes of cooking below make a sort of culinary furnace, wherein if a man abide all

night 'sudor fluit undique rivis.' The news quickly became known. My friends rose in indignation. The 'director' collapsed. I found myself installed in the best room in the house.

The weather defeated us when we had got as far as the Glacier del Broglio in an attempt on the Charforon,[1] and as Séraphin was obliged to leave me, and as I had never visited the lower part of Val d'Aoste, I went down to Courgné with a party of my Italian friends, and hence drove to Ivrea in the cool of the summer night.

The next morning about six I visited the market-place. It was a busy and interesting scene. Many housewives attended by their maids were buying vegetables, fruit and fish. One fish-seller—he looked as if he had caught the fish himself—seemed blessed with a more persuasive tongue and ampler vocabulary than his fellows, and disposed of his wares long

[1] The Charforon was ascended by Messrs T. H. Carson and H. A. Beachcroft, with François Devouassoud, of Chamonix, on August 18, 1883. (*Alpine Journal*, Vol. XI. p. 369.)

before his rivals. He had the right word for everybody, and there was a twinkle in his eye which showed that he was thoroughly enjoying himself.

After a survey of the great moraine and the river I departed to Aosta.

On the evening of August 6, 1883, Sèraphin and I reached the hamlet of Vièyes from Villeneuve, a walk which led across the Pont d'El, which possesses in the view it commands one of the glories of the Graians. The torrent roars 171 feet below between rock-walls green with ferns and parasitic plants, and overhung by limes whose sweet blossoms scented the air; the Grivola towers 10,000 feet above, with pine woods, bare cliffs, ice and snow revealed in full splendour. After engaging Ottavo Bougiot, a likely-looking native, as our porter for the next day we retired to—unrest, complete and uncompromising. The next day we ascended the Nomenon (11,443 feet), a particularly stately secondary peak on the north of the

Grivola. The scenery is charming; waterfall, forest rich in *Linnæa borealis*, and above all the Grivola, often disclosed from base to summit, beguile the way, and though the ascent from the Col de Mesoncles (the route we followed) offers no difficulty, it is not uninteresting.

In the narrow chimney immediately under the summit, a sudden gust of wind, the forerunner of a snowstorm, carried away my hat, and with it my pleasure in the fine eagle's feather which Séraphin offered me on the top of the last rock.

We began our descent in the snowstorm, and for some time huge rocks and pinnacles looming in the snow spray were all we could see. The storm, however, soon passed away, and we found ourselves to the right of the great mural precipice of red rock, perfectly sheer, which is the most striking part of the Nomenon. Ottavo Bougiot showed such interest in the work, and, moreover, climbed with such ease, that he

was allowed to go first. More than once we were brought to a standstill, and I began to suspect that a return to the summit would be necessary. I have a lively recollection of sitting on a ledge with Séraphin in full view of the before-mentioned red wall, and a gully worn smooth by stones and apparently furnished with hold neither for hand nor foot, which Séraphin had with difficulty dissuaded Bougiot from trying. Here we enacted the part of what a modern bard has called 'precipice ponderers,' till Bougiot returned with the news that he had found a way. His climbing did him great credit, for the way was by no means easy to find, and though perhaps the descent ought not nowadays to be called difficult, it certainly was not the easy work of the ascent. At last we reached the place where Baker and I had encamped in 1881, seeing dimly in front of us a large herd of bouquetins, and after a long walk, which in the morning is beautiful, but in

the gathering darkness presented the usual series of temper-trying pitfalls, got back to Vièyes.

I declined the honour of a bed and joined Séraphin in the hayloft, which was much less disagreeable, though the ventilation was too complete for comfort, as a strong north wind blew right in upon us. Next morning by a little after seven we were rewarded by a good breakfast at Cogne. The first thing to be done was to get a hat, so Séraphin was despatched to the general store, which was found to have but one in stock. This luckily fitted me, and at cost of 4 fr. 30 c. lasted the rest of the campaign.

It is certainly strange that long as Cogne has been favourably known as a mountaineering centre, no body of guides has sprung up to meet the demand for their services. After some trouble we discovered a soldier, who had served his time, by name Joseph Jeantet, of Epinel, who on examination

turned out to have made several expeditions among his own mountains (including the passage of the Col Chamonin). He was eager to qualify as a guide, so I engaged him. As the weather was threatening our first expedition was to the chalets of Bardoney, where the chief herdsman was very hospitable.

At this time the peaks and passes between the Col de Bardoney and the Ondezana, with the exception of the Pointe de Sengies, had been but little visited, in fact to English mountaineers were quite unknown. So we devoted a day to that part of the chain next the Col de Bardoney and made acquaintance with the Grande Arolla, 10,834 feet, the Col de la Muraille Rouge, 10,483 feet, and the Punta Forzo, 10,834 feet.

We ascended the Grande Arolla without putting on the rope, then roped and descended to the glacier a little to the right of the opening between it and the Punta

Forzo. We then remounted to the Col, which had a model bergschrund with a dainty snow bridge.

This pass we named Col de la Muraille Rouge, from the great red precipice of the Arolla, which is similar to the one before mentioned on the Nomenon. On the Forzo side there is a steep snow-couloir, the lower part of which we made use of later in the day. We then ascended the Punta Forzo and regained our morning's route west of the Col de Bardoney, keeping on the Forzo side. The view from the Punta revealed a good deal, and my recollections do not altogether coincide with the New Survey; the peak falls away in a rock ridge to the Valeille side. Part of the valley above Cogne with Champlong and the river was distinctly seen. And when near Lilas on our way home we were able to recognise our peak and part of our route.

The night of the 13th was passed at

the chalet de l'Herbetet. On our way up we met a good-natured herb collector heavily laden with flowers for the manufacture of liqueurs. The chalet had all the look of an old friend—it was my third visit to it—and the air was pleasantly warm, so warm indeed that fears as to the weather intruded themselves. During the night the thunder of avalanches was frequently heard, but in the morning the sun broke slowly in splendour between two great bastions of cloud, the prelude to a perfect day.

I had congratulated myself on having planned an expedition, which whilst new should be at the same time short, but I had miscalculated. We crossed the eastern ridge of the Herbetet to the beautiful Dzasset Glacier, and keeping near to the savage cliffs of the same mountain, after turning to the left passed the Col Bonney and Punta Budden, and scrambled with ease to a narrow window in the ridge

which forms the barrier between the Valnontey and Val Savaranche. I venture to call this pass the Fenêtre de Dzasset, a name which suggested itself as the most suitable, when later on in the month we were on the Croix d'Aroletta. Much recognition of old friends followed, and after a meal we turned to descend.

A few steps sufficed to show that our work was now to be of a different character. The rocks in themselves were not difficult, they gave good hold for the most part, but they were glazed with ice. A straight descent was not feasible, so we had to work first to the right, then to the left, and then again to the right, rounding several sloping ledges with nasty corners where 'attention' was the word. The worst part did not last long, and we then found ourselves on a sort of arête running down from the Punta Budden. By this we descended for some time, and then again kept to the right over rotten rocks

where traces of falling stones were discernible. We did not, however, see any fall, and I should add that, as there were great rocks which offered safe refuges at frequent intervals, I do not believe that we incurred any serious risk. We crossed the bergschrund with ease. On the way down we had enjoyed very fine views of the Maurienne and Dauphiné peaks as well as of the nearer ranges.

We then turned our faces to the north, left on our right the Col Bonney, and reached the ridge which forms the boundary of the Montandayné Glacier. A huge bank of snow was piled up against the rock-wall, and a startling view revealed itself on the further side. A snow-slope steep enough to be called a precipice stopped the way, so we had to face westwards, and then work down the side of a tremendous snow mamelon. The snow scenery of this glacier—Gran Nèiron of the New Survey—was superb. When we

had got to the level of the glacier we turned to the east, to what Jeantet was positive was the Col de l'Herbetet. The rocks on our left as we mounted furnished a home to many tiny Alpine plants, but I failed to notice anything very rare. When we reached the top the view revealed to us that the rocks under our feet formed a ridge of the Herbetet, and that to reach the Col of the same name another bay of glacier must be traversed. But the place was beautiful, for hardly a speck broke the exceeding whiteness of the snow. Jeantet was allowed to lead, and had an opportunity of trying his portentous weapon.

When we reached the Col de l'Herbetet and a meal was in progress, we suddenly became witnesses of one of the prettiest sights I have ever beheld. It is one of the great charms of the Graians that you so often come upon bouquetin and chamois, but now we were to see, at comparatively close quarters, a herd of *forty* chamois (I

counted them) go through a perfect series of autumn manœuvres at our feet. They first mounted at right angles to our track with a guide thrown out well in advance. When he was within perhaps ten yards of our footsteps he turned tail, and the whole company went at full speed down the glacier. Again and again the chamois returned, sometimes in one direction sometimes in another, several kids moving with the same graceful ease as their full-grown companions. At last the whole body charged straight up to where we were sitting, and the leader was within a stone's throw of us (we were partially concealed and quite still), when some pieces of ice, set in motion by the sun, swept the slope, and the whole herd hurriedly retired to distant rocks. This expedition is very interesting from an orographical standpoint, and affords much fine scenery. Cogne was regained by the ordinary route.

We next climbed the Roisebanque, de-

scending to Ronco. This walk is the most delightful with which I am acquainted, and perfectly easy, while the lover of flowers may gather on his way such plants as *Oxytropis Gaudini*, *Ranunculus rutæfolius*, *Lloydia serotina*, *Primula pedemontana* and *Eritrichium nanum*. The ridge overlooking the Val Campiglia was jewelled with the lovely little blossoms of the last-named, and near the summit I found a fine tuft of *Campanula cenisia*. The day was perfect.

> 'The blue heavens were bare,
> Stript to their depths by the awakening north.'

I can but hint at all the glories of mountain peak, plain and river. The roofs of Ivrea seemed close under us. We could distinctly see the wide streams of the Dora Baltea below it, and trace the smoke of trains in the great plain to the south. On the ridge near the Colle della Balma we parted with Jeantet, for whom let me say a good word, who returned to Cogne, whilst

we went down to Val Campiglia. We descended nearly to the chapel of San Besso, indulged in a luxurious halt, and then went on to Ronco. The next day we descended in the early morning to Ponte — a walk delightful in every respect, except the pavement of the road in steep places. We then drove up to Lilas and walked on to Ceresole. Here we found a new inn, the Albergo della Levanna, but passed on, notwithstanding the blandishments of the 'padrone,' to the old Stabilimento. I confess my first question was, 'Have you got last year's cook?' 'No,' said the waiter, with enthusiasm, and, as experience afterwards proved, veracity, 'but we have a better.'

The next day I had the pleasure of seeing Messrs Beachcroft and Carson. I had hoped also to have met my friend, Mr Coolidge, but unhappily I was two days behind the time agreed upon, and he had already returned to Bonneval over the Levanna Centrale,

I had come to Ceresole in hopes of finding Blanchetti, and making an assault on the Tour St Pierre. In default of this Séraphin and I ascended the Tresenta, a long expedition. The day was beautiful but very hot; in fact, our passage of the slopes of the Ciamoseretto Glacier under the Charforon was made in as powerful a sun as I ever remember in the Alps. When we had crossed the bergschrund and reached the east end of the ridge over which lies the Col du Mont Corvé, Séraphin was in favour of descending to the glacier of the same name and then remounting, as the rocks in front of us did not please him. Against this proposal I protested with all the energy the heat had left me; the rocks looked passable, and what is worse than going down to climb up again? With all the eloquence of indifferent French I expatiated on the character of the rocks as shown by comparison with what we could see closely, and Séraphin, after a short ex-

ploration, said, to my great relief, 'Monsieur is right; we can cross.' The rest of the ascent was very easy, with the exception of one or two steps on the rocks before we reached the face of the mountain where the snow had melted and re-frozen.

From the summit we enjoyed a view glorious in splendour, and particularly interesting orographically as the basin of the Noaschetta Glacier, with the Grand Paradis and the Pointe de Ceresole, was perfectly seen. We went down very nearly to the Col du Grand Paradis, and then, after traversing the Noaschetta and Goj Glaciers (I being allowed to lead and to go pretty much where I pleased, one of the delights of a second-rate expedition), descended by a narrow gap, which I have ventured to call the Bocchetta del Goj, to the Val Ciamoseretto. A thick mist came upon us when we had just crossed the Bocchetta (which reaches over 10,000 feet), but Séraphin found a way with much judgment, and,

thanks to a friendly snow-couloir, we were not very long in getting to the valley. The view of the séracs of the Ciamoseretto Glacier above the bare and dripping cliffs, with the Charforon and Tresenta towering up massive and majestic on either hand, was very fine. We returned to Ceresole by descending the Val Ciamoseretto, rounding the mountain to our right, and regaining the Vallone del Roc.

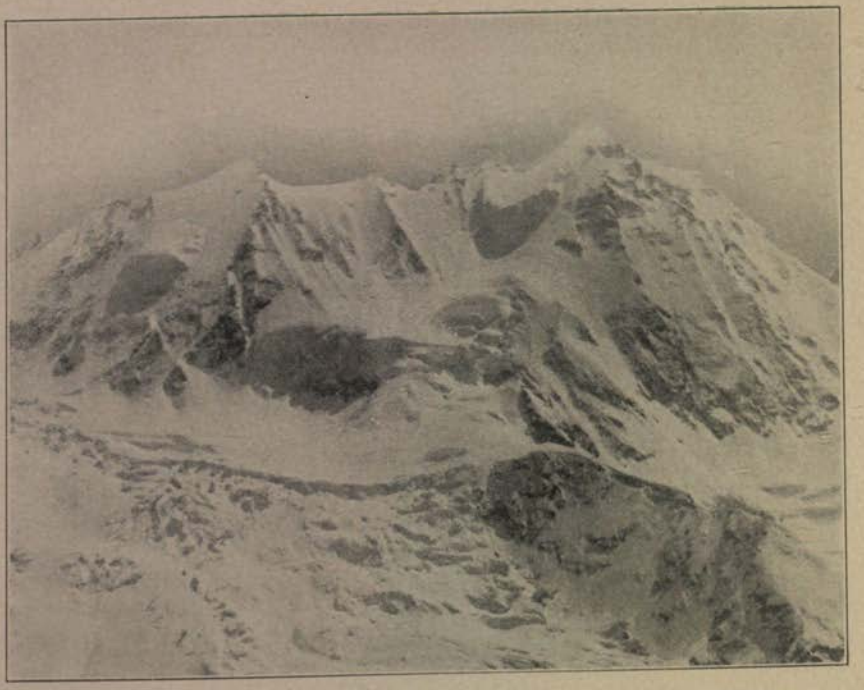
In making this traverse we saw in rocky hollows and ravines wonderful examples of *Saxifraga longifolia.* Tall, graceful, starred with a profusion of blossoms, they rose from strong, firm, silver-edged tufts of green, and waved their twinkling splendours over our heads in homes too high to be reached without a ladder. Two other plants I have noticed in perfection on this northern side of Val d'Orco, one the white form of *Campanula barbata*, the other a very fine variety of *Dianthus neglectus.*

CHAPTER IV

1885—Herbetet Chalet—The Punta Budden—A Strange Corridor—A Variation of the Col Monei—The Muanda di Teleccio—The Tour du Grand St Pierre—A Glorious Day—The Tête de Monei—La Motta—La Bruna—'Accommodated'—Ascent of the Tête de la Tribulation—Col de Grandcroux—Cogne—The Grivoletta—A Royal Hunter—The Bardoney Chalets—The Monveso di Forzo—An Absent Ridge—The Valeille—The Becca de Montandeyné from the Dzasset Glacier—The Fenêtre de Dzasset—The Rifugio V. E.—On the Grand Paradis—Bad Weather—A Last Sight.

ONCE more on the evening of August 4, 1885, I found myself with Séraphin and Jeantet at the Chalet de l'Herbetet. This old shed will always have a particular charm for me. A night in it has been the prelude to so many pleasant climbs, and now that a palatial refuge has been erected on the Val Savaranche flank of the Grand Paradis, this side becomes doubly dear, for here still

'Nature with all her children haunts the hill.'



THE BEC DE LA PATIENCE AND ROCCIA VIVA, FROM THE NORTH-WEST.

I watched a bouquetin retiring up the cliffs, and then turned to survey the view so often before surveyed, yet ever fresh and ever refreshing.

The next morning we followed our old route of 1883 to the foot of the Col Bonney. We then turned to the rocks, and were soon on one of the points of the Punta Budden. The rocks were an agreeable change after the snow, which was too soft for pleasant walking, and the weather was charming. When we had reached a second point, which, from the Dzasset Glacier appears the highest, and on which we found such relics of a cairn as the storms of ten winters had spared, we were much surprised to see yet another point to the south, which seemed to us undoubtedly higher by a few feet. In getting to this point, which took us about half an hour, we passed through one of the most interesting places I have ever seen—a very narrow corridor cut in the solid rock, through which in places we could only

squeeze ourselves with an effort. The descent into it was rather dark, and not altogether pleasant for Jeantet, who was first at the time. Séraphin estimated the length of this corridor at a hundred feet. The highest point was double-headed, in fact singularly like a tuning-fork. This airy pinnacle (12,067 feet) gave us a good view of many old friends. We returned to Cogne by the ordinary route without adventure, except a meeting with the biggest and fattest marmot I ever saw, which caused the men some amusement in stone-throwing.

The next afternoon my friend Coolidge arrived with young Christian Almer; and on the evening of the 7th we went up to the chalets of Monei. We passed the night on clean hay in comparative comfort, though our bedroom was too low-roofed to allow one to stand up in it; and it was decidedly curious to see the men crawling out backwards through the shutter-hole.

The next day we examined two windows

in the ridge between the Tête de Monei and the Col Monei, but declined them both —a severe disappointment, as I had much wished to make a pass from the Monei to the Roccia Viva Glacier. The risks to be encountered seemed unjustifiable. We then, after a visit to a point west of the Col, from which we enjoyed a fine panorama, varied the Col Monei by descending to the Teleccio Glacier, and, after Coolidge and Almer had ascended the Ondezana, with which they expressed themselves as much pleased, we all descended to La Muanda, the highest chalet in Val Piantonetto. Down the last snow we glissaded merrily.

At the Muanda we found very tolerable quarters combined with much hospitality. One of the herdsmen had been in Switzerland several years, and favoured us with a little German, which delighted Almer.

The situation of the Muanda is striking. In front as you look towards the Col Monei is a huge wild cirque; above the first cliffs rough

herbage with a flock of sheep grazing; then a hollow (not visible), and above that wild slopes streaked with snow; highest a great ridge of rocks carved into countless weird pinnacles, with the Tour St Pierre on the right hand and the Monte Nero on the left. To the east rise rugged cliffs furrowed with gullies, dominated by the Scaigoun. On the west appears the Roccia Viva with a glimpse of its glacier; then a minor broken ridge with rough green slopes under it, and the Col Noaschetta backed by another ruined range. The Punta Carne of the new map shuts out the view of the bold and spear-like southern Becca della Tribulazione.

Southwards is a basin with a stream flowing through it, its herbage interspersed with many stones. A herd of cows and calves slowly return to the chalet for the night, accompanied by loud cries of herdsmen and much lowing.

The 9th, a glorious day, we devoted to the Tour St Pierre after sending Jeantet

down to Locana for provisions. The view was all that could be wished, and the whole expedition, notwithstanding that an hour and twenty minutes were spent in step-cutting on the great ice-slope just under the summit, took only nine hours and a quarter walking.

We spent more than two hours on the top in the glorious sunshine, sparing occasionally from the many great peaks which competed with one another for our admiration a look for the chalets of Monei as well as the Muanda, both of which had a homelike appearance in the midst of the ice and snow. But the sight that lives most vividly in my memory is the snow-ridge under the ice-slope, as we looked back at it. The very edge of the snow sparkled like white crystal as the sunbeams struck it, and the blue of the sky above was softened by a diaphanous veil of the loveliest pink clouds—raiment fitting for Shelley's Witch of Atlas. Indeed the imagery and scenery of that delightful poem is 'the choice and noblest' offered by Italian

Alps seen through the poet's piercing vision.

Shortly after we returned to the Muanda, Jeantet came back from his long and fatiguing journey. He brought a very heavy load; and I should like to add that his general willingness, nay anxiety, to do his best all round deserve hearty praise. But an eye to his packing is advisable. If that be denied, be prepared to find sausages and candles wrapped lovingly together in your most irreproachable garments, with two or three bottles of red wine leaking impartially on everything for their next neighbours.

The 10th we spent in an exploration of the Roccia Viva Glacier and an ascent of a point (Tête de Monei, 11,693 feet) which stands at the junction of the Monte Nero spur with the main ridge. Chamois we saw in plenty as we climbed leisurely upwards; in fact, on most days we saw either chamois or bouquetin, or both. While traversing the glacier a small avalanche of hard snow

loosened by the sunshine fell from ledge to ledge of the Roccia Viva. On the Tête de Monei we discussed topography. It is an excellent point of view, commanding in detail the whole circle of peaks from the Patri to the Roccia Viva. We looked right into the Valnontey, and could with perfect ease trace the King's new hunting path which commands the little gorge above Vermiana. The Tour St Pierre was seen in a new light—a sharp ridge with ice-slopes, while the Ondezana was gracefully pretty. Close to our perch on the right was a most ghastly and fascinating chasm, down which several loose blocks went roaring angrily with clouds of dust.

On our way down, when we had traversed the glacier, we kept to our right, and crossed over the ridge near to the point marked 3174 mètres on the new map, having a glorious view of the western peaks of the group, most of them belted with mists which climbed and wreathed and vanished, and added

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greatly to their height and beauty. We descended to a royal hunting path seen far below us, and passing La Motta, a stone shed drear and deserted, reached the Alpe di Goj, from which we enjoyed a fine view of the Tresenta. Many ridges with countless points, sharp, massive, fantastic, grotesque, pierced the clouds. One point had a window in it through which the light showed as through the rock below the summit of the Punta Foura.

A little further we passed a forlorn and featureless lake, and reached La Bruna. It was a dreary spectacle. The grey mist which had been coming on for some time soon developed into a chill drizzle. An examination of the chalet discovered that it was divided into three parts: a doorless chamber (pardon this dishonour to the word) with a damp earth floor and sundry stones cast about at random; another chamber with a fire (supported by, and in part consisting of, cow dung), with several children on a bed in

the corner, and an open entrance into the third division shortly to be tenanted by many cows and a surly bull, who looked as if, had circumstances not been against him, he would have liked to toss the whole company. Inspection decided me against the fire-warmed den, with 'il toro's' seraglio *en suite*. Coolidge assented after a whispered conference with Almer. Here, then, we were to be accommodated for the night. I use the word in Bardolph's sense, 'Accommodated: that is, when a man is, as they say, accommodated; or when a man is, being, whereby 'a may be thought to be accommodated; which is an excellent thing.'

Outside in the drizzle we partook of soup and fragments of provisions in variety, seated —sprawling rather—on a heap of rhododendrons which the herdsmen had brought up for firing. Then it was felt that a good face must be put upon things, so we wandered a little aimlessly, making pretence to sympathise with goat, cow and hound, and then

found Almer and Séraphin carrying the rhododendrons into the doorless shed and trampling them down with much vigour. Well, it might be worse. 'We've got a blanket!' *One* blanket between five! The mist increases and we decide to go to bed. We begin to arrange ourselves. 'Séraphin, have you a little stone for my head?' My humble request was followed by a roar of laughter which sent us generally to our rhododendrons in a good humour. The door was blockaded with an ancient basket and more rhododendrons, and Séraphin, I, Coolidge and Almer lay down side by side with the one blanket over us—more or less. Jeantet decided to take his rest at the feet of Coolidge and Almer, and after many shots at the candle, resigned himself to the companionship of two pairs of heels. Not for long though. After an hour or two I heard Jeantet stirring. One must do something to induce warmth. Coolidge and Almer found the easiest process was to

kick Jeantet, and in so doing loosened the blanket and finally 'bagged' it all. Séraphin rolled and grumbled in his sleep with a monotonous persistency. And then all of a sudden night became hideous. Just as Jeantet withdrew and a penetrating gust of wind took his place, the dog began to bark, the children to scream, the herdsmen to swear, the cattle to bellow and knock their bells about with tremendous effect. A cow had got loose and was, as far as we made out, perambulating the seraglio, and treating her private enemies to a taste of her horns. I roared with laughter, and when the noise had subsided, devoted my attention to recovering the blanket which Séraphin and I by this time had wholly lost. I tugged—it gave—I tugged again, hastily pushed it over Séraphin, who gave a heavy lurch, and so it was safe till morning. His sleep grew tranquil, and I dosed off, and it was a good thing for Jeantet that he had sought the herdsmen's best bedroom, for

I fear the two pairs of heels would have given him a lively time. Such was our night in the forlorn cowshed of La Bruna; yet, softened by time, the recollection of it is no unwelcome memory of the summer's climbing. The bright spot in this desolate place was the unselfish hospitality of the herdsmen.

On the 11th we made the first ascent of the Tête de la Tribulation (11,949 feet). After we quitted the Glacier de Grandcroux Sud and turned to our left, the weather grew bad. Whirling mist, rain and snow annoyed us, but there being no difficulties to encounter we reached the top without serious trouble. There we only spent five minutes, but during that time one of those sudden changes which so often befriend the mountaineer was vouchsafed us. The clouds parted, the sun shone out, and lo! the whole length of the Valnontey with the green meadows of St Ours, Cogne with its conspicuous church tower, and yellow corn-

plots climbing the steeps behind. Many times have I lazily looked up at the Tête, which Coolidge and Almer compared in shape to the Ecrins on a small scale, and it was pleasant to reverse the process. Perhaps the view lives none the less in one's memory because it was momentary.

Quite close to the summit was a deep transverse crevasse in the ridge of the mountain, jewelled with lovely icicles, and with an atmosphere of pale blue, as though the last glimpse of the sky before the storm came had been made a prisoner there.

We then crossed the Col de Grandcroux. The slope on the east side of the pass by which we descended is very steep, but fortunately, though most of the face was ice, the snow just here was in perfect order, and Séraphin struck the bergschrund just at the right place. We then made a traverse at a level till we were almost under the rocks on the western side of the

pass, when we were stopped by another big schrund, so Almer led backwards a little way and soon found a passable spot. We then got down without further difficulty, halting once at the sound of a sudden roar, to see an avalanche of rocks from the Tête de Valnontey leap wildly down the rock-wall above the west side of the Grand-croux Glacier. As I have now made the passage of this Col both ways, I venture to say that it is very much finer, though less easy, when taken from Val d'Orco to Cogne. We reached Cogne a little after six. The weather had quite cleared up, the evening lights played softly on forest and upland, warming the grey hamlets and brightening the ruddy gold of the ripe corn on the terraced hillside of Gimilian; and as at each turn in the path some well-remembered feature came in sight, one felt something of the charm of a return home after four days in the wilderness.

The next day was spent in laziness at

Cogne. On the 13th Coolidge went up the Grivola with Almer and Séraphin, while I wandered about the meadows and came upon edelweiss growing close by the river, as well as seed of *Oxytropis Gaidini*, for which I had often sought in vain, close to the bridge which crosses the river near to the name Buttier on the new map. From the same spot may be seen an ideal view of the white cone of the Roccia Viva, rising high and lonely into the sky above the forest. The spot is easy to find, for on the other side of the river a tree-embosomed chalet sleeps in the sun, young cattle sport in the pasture below, and tiny corn-plots perched on the shoulders of the rock above nestle softly in the arms of the forest. This peaceful homestead has a sweet half-English air which lends it an attraction of its own.

The next day Séraphin and I made the first ascent of the Grivoletta (11,569 feet). We had noticed this pretty peak, which

bears a curious likeness to its majestic neighbour, in walking up to Cogne from Aosta. From the top the whole chain of Mont Blanc was quite clear. Towered St Pierre and a long reach of the Aosta valley near Morgex were easily seen. Pont d'El with the great hollow of the valley below it was imposing. The sound of the cow-bells from the herds which we could see feeding near the chalets of Nomenon floated tunefully up to us, and the rugged Nomenon added to his claims on my affection by looking his fiercest on the side where we had descended him.

While we were at Cogne the King arrived for chamois and bouquetin hunting, much to the delight of the villagers, who formed a vast army of beaters. The little gorge just above Vermiana saw the death of nine or ten noble bouquetins, which we inspected as they were borne into the village, and right royal beasts they were. We had the satisfaction of dining one

evening on a part of one of them, a present to our landlady, which she received with no little pride.

On the 16th we started for the Col Bardoney. The path to the Col in its lower parts runs through fine scenery, where the pine-woods open here and there into green lawns, and at times the wild torrent thrusts himself boldly into the picture.

On the other side of the pass we found a thick mist, which worried us much, as it was impossible to see anything a hundred yards off. We had great debates as to where we were and whither we ought to go. At last, after we had traversed a considerable distance westward, we found ourselves, the mist having lifted a little, at the foot of a long couloir with snow conspicuous at its head. Up this we went, and when we reached the top, Séraphin and I both thought that the peak to our left (west) was the Punta Forzo, which

we ascended in 1883, though we could not understand how there came to be so much snow, as our recollections were of climbing rocks. However, we went up easily enough, though step-cutting was necessary. In the cairn we found no card of ours, but that of Dr Baretti, dated 1866, which made it perfectly clear that we were on the Monveso di Forzo (10,890 feet)—a peak which I had long been anxious to visit.

At this height the mists did not trouble us, though they still floated lingeringly round the flanks of the Ciardonei Glacier far below. I walked along the ridge some distance to the S.W., and then we carefully studied the map; the result is the addition to it of a great rock ridge which separates the Glacier de Sengie from the Arolla Glacier. To see these mountains at close quarters was delightful; indeed, I have seldom been better pleased on a small peak than on this one. The topography of this



COGNE, FROM THE EAST.

part of the Cogne group had long puzzled me, now it was clear.

After returning to the Col we went down the glacier, which was in part steep, towards the Valeille, and left it in an hour for a moraine on the right, so steep as to require steps to be made in places. When we had reached the green mountain side, still at a considerable height above the valley, we kept along it for some distance to the right, and after crossing a wet gully, overgrown with alder and other bushes and tall grass, got down to the valley near a solitary chalet. A scramble over a tributary brook and a passage of the Valeille torrent by a snow-bridge, the remains of a huge avalanche, brought us to the King's hunting-path. As we quitted the Valeille the glory of sunset died softly away from the far-off summit of Mont Blanc, and we walked into Cogne in the grateful coolness of the evening twilight.

On the 18th we left Cogne for the often-

visited Chalet de l'Herbetet. We were both of us sorry to quit the Hôtel de la Grivola, for the landlady did her very best, and with success, to make us comfortable. The food was good, but of *one* dish beware—pseudonymous veal served up in *hot jam!*

Our object was to ascend the Bec de Montandeyné, and descend to Val Savaranche by the Fenêtre de Dzasset. Our night at the old cowshed was not altogether comfortable, as rain fell and the roof was not watertight. It was necessary to lie without moving to the right or to the left, as two little streams dripped methodically one by one's right ear, the other by the left. But three blanketfuls of hay—an unusual luxury—diminished the hardness of the floor. Léon Guichardaz, when he met Séraphin some days afterwards, said many things about our iniquity in taking this hay into the shed. But as it was perfectly dry when we took it, and

remained dry in the shed in spite of the rain, Séraphin had not much difficulty in showing, at anyrate to his own satisfaction, that we deserved gratitude rather than blame.

We followed the usual way to the Fenêtre de Dzasset. Coolidge was much struck with the sharp pyramid of the Herbetet, which certainly deserves to make a fourth with Cogne's three great peaks the Paradis, Grivola, and Tour St Pierre. At the foot of the Fenêtre we left our baggage and then ascended the Bec. When we reached the north-east foot of the peak we kept a little to the left, crossed the bergschrund, and, turning to the right, reached the rocks by a steep little ice-slope. We then scrambled to the summit (12,632 feet) by these rocks of the eastern face, which in places were steep and afforded an interesting climb, reminding us of the last bit of the Tour St Pierre. Our only discomfort was the cold

which was considerable, the storm of the previous night having chilled the stone; but the sun on the summit was a satisfactory compensation. The view gave us, amongst many other things, Monte Rosa to the Pelvoux.

After spending an hour and a half we regained the foot of the Fenêtre de Dzasset by the same route. We then crossed this pass to the Montandeyné Glacier, and found it much easier than in 1883, the rocks being free from ice. From the Montandeyné Glacier an easy descent, in part by a royal hunting path, took us to Val Savaranche, and at 6.50 we reached Dégioz after a most interesting day.

We found the little inn very comfortable, and beds were forthcoming at the Curé's in large airy rooms. Some Italian gentlemen who were at dinner with a garde-chasse officer very kindly gave us some bouquetin—the King had hunted the Val Savaranche after leaving Cogne—

which was much better eating than that we had at Cogne. It had been apparently stewed in wine, and had a very much finer flavour than chamois.

The next day we walked up to the new Refuge, which has been built in memory of King Victor Emmanuel on the Grand Paradis. Hitherto, though I had traversed the Val Savaranche four times, I had always been more or less in haste. To-day we had time to appreciate the varied torrent and forest scenery, of which the gorge above Maisonasse gives the finest stretch. The pines, which had rooted themselves on wondrous ledges and promontories of rock above the plunging torrent, are among the finest I have seen in the Alps. We spent some time in gathering wood on the slopes which the last belt of forest raggedly clothes, and reached the Refuge, which is of royal dimensions, a little after six.

The next day the weather broke. We

ascended the Grand Paradis by the ordinary route—alike easy and popular—in a gale of wind (though we had indeed some fine views on the way up), and descended in a snow-storm. On the way down Séraphin and I rushed up the Becca di Moncorvé (12,680 feet) in a few minutes, the wind almost blowing us up. I got the view I wanted, as the snow obligingly ceased temporarily, of the ridge connecting the point we were on with the Tresenta, roared and signalled to Séraphin—no voice under a roar could be heard in such a wind—and in a very few minutes we were on the glacier again.

The next day was doubtful, so, after a wait, I resigned my intentions on the Charforon and went down to Dégioz, took a hurried meal, said good-bye to Coolidge and Almer—all of us being equally sorry to dissolve the partnership which had carried us through so successful a campaign—and by a forced march reached Villeneuve in two hours and a half.

One glorious sight—a crowning memory—I had as I rode down the valley. Suddenly the dark curtain of storm-clouds was caught away by the winds, and the Nomenon and Grivola showed in full splendour the majesty of the everlasting hills.

On later visits I have been charmed with the lower reaches of the Val Savaranche, for there the Savara hides himself deep under a fragrant roof of limes, which muffle his roar and allow you to hear the voice of the brook on your right, whose song is an echo of the music of the Georgics of old, as he swirls on his skilfully-channelled way to give life to so many a thirsty slope. Soon on your left the Val de Rhèmes opens wide his richly-wooded portals: orchards and cornfields show themselves in profusion, and a vanguard of vines and maize announces the nearness of that vast garden, the Aosta Valley.

CHAPTER V

Bad Weather of 1888—The Punta Nera—Gimilian—Col de Lauzon—Dégioz—'The Palace'—Grand Paradis—Col de l'Abeille—Cresta Gastaldi—Glacier de l'Abeille—Becca di Noaschetta—Tête de Valnontey—Col de Valnontey—Col de la Lune—Becca di Monciair—Ceresole.

HAD not two years' absence from the Alps sharpened the longing to be once more among them, I think I should hardly have ventured out in 1888. 'Snow and rain! Wind and snow!' Worse and worse grew the accounts I received. And when I reached the Lake of Geneva, and saw the lower mountains clothed in white, I must own my spirits sank. However, I was now in for it, good or bad, so I lost no time, but hurried straight over the Great St Bernard to find my friend Coolidge and

the two Almers (Christian the younger and Rudolph) at the Hôtel du Mont Blanc at Aosta. Dark indeed was the tale they told. They had been caught in a 'tourmente' even on the Théodule, and had had a hard fight to get across.

Next day we went up to Cogne, and on the morrow started for a climb, only to be caught in a wild snowstorm at a very moderate height, and, after waiting for several hours under a dismal wet rock, to return disconsolate. On the following day Coolidge started for the Tersiva (11,697 feet), but was beaten while still well below the summit by a freezing wind of exceeding violence. But that north wind, 'cruel only to be kind,' was a benefactor beyond price. It continued to blow all night, and was the forerunner of eight days of the most perfect weather. On the morning of August 8, sure of our day, we started for the Punta Nera, a peak of 12,113 feet, which rises on the ridge.

south of the Trajo Glacier, facing the Grivola. The climb was perfectly easy, and the view magnificent.

The descent, the first part being very rapid, was made direct to the King's encampment (reached in 1 hr. 15 mins. from the summit) on the Col de Lauzon route. A good deal of snow lay about, and made things easy for us. On the grass slopes near the path the alpine wallflower and *Eritrichium nanum* were very dwarf and brilliant. Indeed, this spot is one of the wild gardens of Cogne, if I may use the phrase. Others may be found in and above the Chavanis pastures,[1] and on the cliffs on the way to the Col de l'Herbetet,[2] while at a height of about 11,000 feet the Coupé de Monei[3] and Becca di Noaschetta may be mentioned for the number of little plants that blossom in the crannies of their rocks, with a bright and delicate colouring

[1] *Alpine Journal*, Vol. XII. p. 86.
[2] *Ibid.* Vol. XI. p. 15. [3] *Ibid.* p. 19.

and a patient courage which endear them to the mountaineer.

On the 9th Coolidge enjoyed his revenge and a splendid panorama on the Tersiva, while I spent the morning in botanising, especially in searching for a certain *Epilobium*, which I had once seen near the end of the Grandcroux Glacier. By the riverside, between the point where the pineclad mountain-slopes close in to form the gorge of the Valnontey, and Crétaz, after a long hunt I came upon it. My plant found, I strolled up to Gimilian, much wondering that here and there

'All the place was peopled with sweet airs,'

till I discovered the cause in some delicate white roses which throve in the bushes among the corn-plots. From the meadows above the hamlet I enjoyed one of those views which can be mentioned only, not described. The dark veil of the storm withdrawn had left the mountain world to

liquid light and sunshine. Cogne, with its meadows, forests and crown of snow-peaks on one's left, and Mont Blanc and the Trélatête throned in an azure sky in front, still rise before me as I write.

The next day Coolidge and the Almers crossed the Herbetet Col to Val Savaranche, climbing the Mont Herbetet (12,396 feet) on the way by the northern ridge, and finding the rocks rather difficult towards the summit by reason of the great quantity of snow. In 1881 G. P. Baker and I, with Ulrich Almer to lead us, had climbed it by the eastern ridge—one of the best rock-climbs in the Cogne district.

Meantime, with Joseph Jeantet and his brother, I crossed the Lauzon with the baggage, and did a little plant-hunting by the way. Just above the lower Luvione chalet we enjoyed a perfect view of the Herbetet's bold pyramid; sharp, massive, defiant, it almost deserved Coolidge's eulogy, 'the finest of the Cogne peaks.'

Just below the chalet, when we had crossed the stream to its true right bank, on a steep close to the water's edge, where edelweiss was very plentiful, I found *Primula pedemontana* in abundance. We continued on the right bank, and by a path rapidly increasing in steepness descended upon Tignet, which made a pretty picture as it shone in the sunlight, with its timbered houses stained a rich brown by years of storm, and pasture, river, and pine-wood, like familiar friends. We did not, however, go on to Tignet, but, bending to the right, made a traverse across steep meadows, and, passing between some houses, found ourselves, to my surprise, before the door of the little inn at Dégioz.

Our first duty was to secure some toil-enduring beast to carry our baggage and provisions to the Rifugio on the morrow. After some negotiation Jeantet made a bargain, satisfactory to both parties, with a man from Pont. Then, dinner ordered, I

wandered out to wait for Coolidge and watch the world of haymakers everywhere hard at work. The hay-scented air soon began to grow cool, as the sunshine climbed higher and higher up the forests and mountain-walls to the music of cow-bell and torrent. By-and-by Coolidge and the Almers arrived, having had a glorious day on the Herbetet.

We slept in the big room that used to be the kitchen (St Anthony, in brilliant fresco, adorns the outside), which has a window looking out on the main street, through which a persevering observer can see fairly into the chamber. The old cook furnished us with very good meals and was most anxious that we should want for nothing which the resources of the village could furnish. In fact, she was so anxious to please that I think the filling of my boots with chopped hay must have been intended as a gracious attention. If it did not delight me, it at anyrate amused Coolidge, who

laughed heartily at the stream that poured out of them. I am inclined to think that the earnest gaze of a passer-by, which Coolidge discovered directed upon him while dressing, was intended as compensation for the absence of hay in his boots.

In due time the next day, August 11, we reached the Rifugio (9105 feet), and there established ourselves for four nights. I need not say more than that we found it exceedingly comfortable, and were duly grateful to the Italian Alpine Club. It was known amongst us as 'The Palace,' and we had it all to ourselves, as nobody came near us except a 'garde-chasse,' who has charge of the building, and our porter Jeantet, who made a very thorough acquaintance with the track between 'The Palace' and Dégioz.

It was no small pleasure to see, as we did day by day, the awakening of the morning on the snow-peaks; but the evening colour effects were unspeakably beautiful. All the points of the various ridges would suddenly

assert themselves with the most startling sharpness in an atmosphere of very pale gold, while the heaven was of a subtle pale pink, and the moon cold and clear. Nor was there wanting that band of green (or, shall I say, eau de Nil?) along the horizon which is the sure presage of fine weather. I venture to give one note from my pocket-book as a specimen :—'Evening about 7.30, most lovely golden clouds here and there. The moon very pale. The Charforon and Monciair pale gold and pink.'

Our great ambition was to climb the eastern side of the Grand Paradis by way of the col between it and the Cresta Gastaldi, and then to ascend the Cresta itself. Many times had I reproached myself for not having long ago tried the Cresta Gastaldi, for I felt certain of success, and I coveted the ascent of the Paradis by the route by which we eventually descended him more, perhaps, than any expedition in the Alps. The thought that this particular route was

untouched dashed with bitterness even the delightful memories of 1879, when Alphonse Payot and I crossed the Paradis from the Valnontey to Ceresole. Everyone who has a passion—as what mountaineer has not?—for a particular group in the Alps will, I know, sympathise with my feelings.

The morning of August 12 found us in high spirits, and much interested in the account of a dream which Rudolph, who is an enthusiastic chamois-hunter, had had, wherein he had chased a bouquetin, caught him, and ridden him home to Grindelwald! In 3 hrs. 17 mins., walking from 'The Palace,' we reached the summit of the Grand Paradis. It was Coolidge's second and my third visit. After enjoying the splendid view we turned south-east from the summit with the cairn, and gained the top of a great couloir which is a very conspicuous feature in views of the Grand Paradis from the east. It is just north of the rocky aiguille, now called Roc du Grand Paradis, at the angle

where the Grand Paradis ridge and the Pointe de Ceresole (Pic de la Lune)—Becca di Moncorvé ridge—join each other, and its head is the next gap but one south-east of the peak with the cairn. And now came the fateful moment. Christian was let down the couloir to see what he could of the route. By-and-by he reappeared. Well? Coolidge looked at Christian, who nodded assent, and then turning to me said, 'It's all right.'

Then Rudolph took the lead, followed by me and Coolidge, while Christian had the place of honour as last man. The beginning of the descent, which was very steep, required care, as the rocks were deeply covered with snow. Above us to our left hung a great cornice like a monstrous bat with wings outspread, but we avoided any danger from it by making a sharp angle to the right. What a glorious sight as one looked back at the cornice! What a splendour of white and azure! At first we had moved one at a time, but before long we were able to descend

at a good pace, and in an hour and twenty minutes from the top of the couloir we were on the Col.

Here we found a bee stretched on the snow almost lifeless, and little recking of the fame that awaited him. Coolidge carried him to 'The Palace,' where he revived in the sunshine. After this bee we named the Col (12,638 feet[1]), not without a thought of the well-known Col des Hirondelles. Five minutes' sharp walking from the Col took us to the top of the Cresta Gastaldi (12,671 feet), well content with our day, and looking down in wonder on sunlit Cogne. Seen from the valley our mountain is a fair white crest, seen at evening from the Herbetet chalet—

> 'A moonbeam in the shadow of a cloud
> Is less heavenly fair.'

[1] The heights assigned to the Col de l'Abeille (3852 mètres), Cresta Gastaldi (3862 mètres), Col Chamonin (3698 mètres) and Col de la Lune (3513 mètres) are taken from the map of the Grand Paradis group by Signor Pio Paganini, contained in his work *La Fototopografia in Italia* (Rome, 1889), for a copy of which I am indebted to the author's courtesy.

It lives in my memory as one of the loveliest sights I ever looked upon.

An hour's keen enjoyment followed. The view was beautiful. From the spotless snow-plain of the Tribulation outspread at our feet we looked down upon Cogne's familiar fields; while the great peaks round linked one to another the happy summer holidays I had spent amongst them, and the Dauphiné giants in the distance forged for Coolidge a similar but far longer chain of memories. I don't think we forgot to drink to our new peak in a cup of Madeira which, if it had not made a voyage to the Indies, had, at anyrate, travelled the long round from Cogne to Dégioz and 'The Palace.'

On our return to the Col a brief conference ensued. Christian having pronounced the descent to the Noaschetta Glacier practicable so far as it was visible, and being very keen to try it—as, I need not say, we ourselves were—we started diagonally

across the little hanging glacier which clings to this side of the Grand Paradis, and is so pronounced a feature in the view from the Tresenta. This little glacier, hitherto untouched, we would call Glacier de l'Abeille. The glacier crossed, we came to its ice-fall, but avoided all danger by keeping to its right, though we passed so close to its towering pinnacles and huge icicles that we had a glorious view of them against the sky. Then after a jump we made our way to the right over not difficult rocks, and came to a big couloir, into which we descended without much trouble, and then tramped down it as hard as we could and shot out merrily on to the Noaschetta Glacier in triumph. There we exchanged congratulations, and patted Christian on the back for a piece of guiding which for skill, foresight and prudence places him in the very foremost rank amongst guides, while as for Rudolph, he had led down the great couloir, and brought up the rear during the

descent from the Col de l'Abeille with perfect care and steadiness, which promise well for his future excellence as a leader. The view as we looked back from the spot where the glacier begins to slope to the Col du Grand Paradis was splendid. To the left (in looking back) of our route, huge rock-towers—five bigger than the rest—frowned down upon us, and to the right the ice-fall of the Glacier de l'Abeille hung over what looked a savage impracticable wall. I thought of my description of this route in 1883, as seen from the Tresenta—'seems very risky, being commanded by crumbling rock-towers and *séracs*'—with a smile, for I believe that the route we took, as we found it, was perfectly safe. We then returned to 'The Palace' by the Col du Grand Paradis and Moncorvé Glacier. As we talked over our day's work in the evening Coolidge agreed with me that there was but one word to describe it—it was ideal. But I must add that we found the snow in



COL DE L'ABEILLE AND CRESTA GASTALDI, FROM THE NOASCHETTA GLACIER.

the great couloir, and also on the Glacier de l'Abeille, in an exceptional state. It was simply perfect. In most years the great couloir is probably a sheet of ice.

The next day we retraced our steps to the Col du Grand Paradis, and traversed the whole length of the Noaschetta Glacier — a beautiful and extensive ice-field answering to the Plan on the north of the chain. It may be said to be divided into a west bay, as far as the Pic de la Lune or Pointe de Ceresole, and an east bay from that peak to the Tête de la Tribulation and Becca di Noaschetta. We then climbed the easy western ridge of the peak (up to that time without a name), marked 3447 mètres (11,310 feet) on the new map, which we christened Becca di Noaschetta, and gained the top in three quarters of an hour from the glacier. These easy rocks were

'Lit by the gems of many a starry flower.'

I noticed especially *Eritrichium nanum*,

Petrocallis pyrenaica, and *Ranunculus glacialis*.

The summit commands a sight of Cogne over the main ridge, and certainly *the finest view* of the grand Paradis I know.

Thence in 30 mins. by a traverse above the Glacier du Grandcroux Sud and a snow-couloir we reached the Col between the Tête de la Tribulation, and the point marked 3543 mètres (11,625 feet) on the new map. In 5 mins. more we reached this point, which, from its position, we named Tête de Valnontey. In 1885, when we came up from La Bruna by the Glacier du Grandcroux Sud and this same couloir, we had been unable to see anything till the weather suddenly cleared on the top of the Tête de la Tribulation. The Tête de Valnontey is but the end of a ridge, 'tis true, but as a viewpoint it enjoys the distinction of looking straight down the whole length of the Valnontey. We saw to perfection the pines in the narrow gorge

at the foot of the Grandcroux, the great green lawn of the Cogne meadows, with their protecting forests on either hand, and Cogne itself lapped in quiet sunshine. Beyond, the gold of the ripening corn glowed in undulating lines on the steep slopes, and Gimilian's picturesque and weather-worn chalets slumbered on the hill-brow — all seemed peace. Suddenly the thunder of an avalanche from the ice-fall of the Dzasset Glacier rolled up to us, and drew the eye to a perfect view of the huge Plan de la Tribulation. This is the only point from which the Grand Sertz makes a good show. Hence it appears a tremendous wall, with a snow-clad head.

Then we crossed the Col — Col de Valnontey (circa 11,596 feet)—and jumping a bergschrund descended towards the Plan de la Tribulation. Again, the snow was all that could be wished, and our route consequently easy, much to my surprise, for though I had hoped that it might be

possible to ascend to the Col from the Plan, never in my wildest flights did I think of descending. In fact this Col was generally, in our discussions, looked upon by Coolidge as a joke; and I suspect that where we found good snow, ice in most seasons holds the field.

In 30 mins. we gained the Col between the Tête de la Tribulation and Pic de la Lune, or Pointe de Ceresole, first reached from the north by Dr Baretti, August 31, 1874. This Col we named Col de la Lune, as a consecration of the memories of the beauty of this side of the Plan when seen by moonlight in bivouacs at the Herbetet.

From the Col (11,529 feet) Coolidge, with his chronic hunger for peaks still unsatisfied, and the two guides ascended the Pic de la Lune (up which I had been in 1879), while I basked in the sunshine and enjoyed the grateful silence unbroken save by the tinkling of water among the rocks.

By-and-by the attractions of a most delicate and lovely snow-ridge, which rose gently tapering to a sharp edge on the east of the Col, proved too great to be resisted, so, finding the snow excellent, I went up it and looked down once more on Cogne.

On Coolidge's arrival, in high spirits, we turned to descend to the Noaschetta Glacier. On our way up the Becca di Noaschetta we had carefully examined the descent from our present position. We saw a grim wall of red rock furrowed with several couloirs, not inviting, indeed, but still 'food for fortune's tooth.' It is only fair to point out that we had this advantage over Dr Baretti, who only saw the descent from the top of the Col. Again Almer's skill was conspicuous. Over a streak of snow we descended to the right to rocks much easier in reality than they had looked from below, and presently clambered, with some care, into a snow-couloir. Then we

kept straight down, till before long a patch of ice drove us to the left-hand rocks. The ice circumvented, we again descended into the couloir and rushed, as fast as the now softened snow would let us, out on to the Noaschetta Glacier in 35 mins. from the Col. And so another long-cherished scheme saw itself accomplished.

The scenery of this eastern bay of the glacier is fine, and the cirque of rock from the Pic de la Lune to the Becca di Noaschetta is imposing, as will be inferred from the foreground of the illustration which faces page 36.

Then off we tramped for 'The Palace,' casting a well-satisfied eye back at our day's work and making little of the soft snow. By-and-by, when we reached the centre of the western bay, by common consent we stood still for a good look at the Cresta Gastaldi and the Col de l'Abeille, and I think the whole party felt well contented. At last the south side of

the Plan was well explored.[1] Then to the Col du Grand Paradis, and so to 'The Palace.'

On the 14th Coolidge, with the Almers, traversed the Tresenta and the Charforon, ascending the latter by a new route from the Col du Moncorvé, while I lounged about in the sun and mused upon the change 'The Palace' had effected. In 1883 I traversed the Tresenta, starting from and returning to Ceresole, and found it a very long day, whereas Coolidge only took 9½ hrs. (including all halts) to do the two peaks from the Rifugio and back.

The next day we retraced Coolidge's track to the Col du Charforon, having added Jeantet to our party as a reward for the good-natured and generally satisfactory way in which he had carried out his duties as porter. With imperturbable good

[1] See *Alpine Journal*, Vol. XIV. pp. 147-9, for details of the work of Dr Baretti and others. It should have been clearly stated there that Dr Baretti was the first to reach the Col de la Lune from the great snow-field of the Plan de la Tribulation.

humour he tramped up and down between 'The Palace' and Dégioz, not seldom heavily laden. I have praised his willingness before, and must in justice to him re-praise it here. From the Col in 35 mins. we ascended the Becca di Monciair—a very graceful peak, well seen from 'The Palace' — the only excitement being an arch just above a big red rock, which made us keep out a little to the right, or Val Savaranche, side. The great tooth so conspicuous in all views of the peak from the north, which we had looked forward to passing with some interest, is below the crest of the ridge.

The summit commands a fine view, but wildly driven light white clouds swept swiftly over us at intervals. In fact the weather gave us just

> 'The uncertain glory of an April day,
> Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,
> And by-and-by a cloud takes all away.'

The Paradis in a whirling veil of mist

was massive and splendid. Christian varied his route a little in descending by going straight down the slope immediately below the summit (as you look to the Col du Charforon). On the ascent we had kept to the Val d'Orco side. This slope is of the steepest, and in most years I suspect hard ice; but we felt little surprise at being able to walk straight down it after our previous experience of easy snow where ice must in most seasons be found.

We got down from the Col to the Broglio Glacier without trouble, except at the one bad place which G. P. Baker and I, led by Christian's elder brother Ulrich, had found in 1881, where we had a little amusement. Here Jeantet, who was last and carrying a heavy load, managed very creditably. The discovery of *Campanula barbata alba* in its old habitat, and of some late flowers of *Liliastrum* were the only incidents of the descent, till we reached by a short cut the meadow above

the road to the Stabilimento, where I called upon Jeantet for an overcoat wherewith to make a becoming entry into the Albergo della Levanna. The old Stabilimento was closed, and a very large building better suited to modern wants was well on the way to completion on the other side the road facing the Albergo.

Under the awning who should be seated but the Comte d'Aglie, who welcomed us warmly to Ceresole. We had afterwards the pleasure of meeting his father, to whose courteous kindness we are much indebted for the enjoyableness of our little stay at the Albergo. He was our guide to a charming spot in the great forest across the Orco where soaring pines, bubbling stream, moss and ferns made a perfect sylvan hermitage, the restful coolness of which we greatly enjoyed. As for the views on our way back, they were more than lovely, they were loveliness. The shining river, the great waterfall

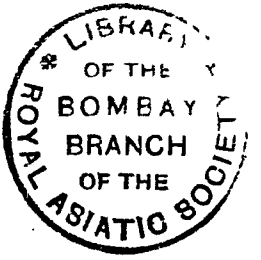
veiled in sun-illumined spray, little plots of golden corn, gracious spaces of greenest herbage dotted with trees which gradually massed themselves into the serried ranks of the forest—all this was ours to rejoice in—

'Under the roof of blue Italian weather.'

In the background the proud peaks of the Levanna rose cold and stern.

On the morning of the 16th 'as the froward sky began to lower' we all started together up the Val d'Orco, and separated where the path for the Col du Carro leaves the main track, Coolidge and the Almers for Bonneval and Lanslebourg, Jeantet and I for the Nivolet and Aosta. Both destinations, thanks to forced marches, were reached the same evening. So our party broke up, and with it the fine weather, that week of wondrous weather, which had added so largely to our appreciation of Christian's exceptional skill and

foresight, and of Rudolph's steady promise of future excellence, to our knowledge of the Eastern Graians, and not least to our happy memories of Italian Alps.





THE BEC DE LA PATIENCE AND ROCCIA VIVA, FROM THE MONEI CHALETS. (EVENING.

CHAPTER VI

The Monei Chalets—The Tour de St Ours—The Piantonetto Refuge—The Bec de la Patience—Bad Weather—Supplies Fail—A Veteran Walker—Val Piantonetto—Beautiful Scenery—Locana—Pont Canavese—Col Bardoney—The Grivoletta again. • 1893—Liddes—Signor G. Bobba—Chalets of Monei—Cresta and Col Paganini—Punta del Tuf—A Dangerous Descent—Col Teleccio—The Eastern Point of the Gemelli de la Roccia Viva—A Capital Climb—A Thunderstorm—Flight—Magnificent Lightning—Col Monei—The Punta Crevasse—The Nomenon Chalets.

THE evening of August 4, 1892, found me at the chalets of Monei, above the Valnontey, in company with Mr E. T. Compton, who had very kindly accepted an invitation to join in a visit to the Piantonetto Refuge. We had with us François Pession and André Pelissier, of Val Tournanche, as guides, and Léon Guichardaz, of Cogne, as extra porter. We spent a

pleasant evening in watching the spacious amphitheatre of snow and ice which closes in the Valnontey, while Compton made beautiful sketches of the Roccia Viva, and of the Herbetet. The Herbetet has been defrauded of his rights, and reminds one that not only is it true that the world knows nothing of its greatest men, but that it is not less true that great mountains frequently miss the meed of fame which they deserve. Otherwise this glorious peak, now beginning to gain fame, would ere this have enjoyed the pride of place so long reserved for the Grand Paradis, the Grivola, and the Tour St Pierre.

On the morrow we walked leisurely up to the Coupé de Monei, Compton, who was in the pink of condition, generously accommodating himself to the infirmities of an arrival of yesterday. Chamois and bouquetin diverted our upward way, the latter showing splendidly against the sky-line, to the great excitement and delight of François and



THE HERBETET, FROM NEAR THE MONEI CHALETS

André. When we reached the Coupé, and saw others in the Valeille, the beautiful and fearless creatures performed such feats that François exclaimed, 'I wonder they do not kill themselves!' The enthusiasm of the two Val Tournanche men was pleasant to witness.

About ten o'clock we left the Coupé and began the ascent of the peak to the south of it, now known as the Tour St Ours; for surely the patron saint of Cogne would be found as near as possible to St Andrew and St Peter. Blanchetti once told me at Ceresole that he had climbed the peak near the Coupé de Monei with an Italian gentleman. I took him to mean the Tour St Ours, but when Mr Stallard's party climbed the Tour St André, nearer the Tour St Pierre, and found Blanchetti's card on the summit, the inference I at once drew was that the peak immediately above the Coupé, now known as the Tour St Ours, had not been ascended. Only one course was there-

fore satisfactory—viz., to climb the peak. Well, an hour and three-quarters—the first part spent in cutting up and across a steep slope, the latter portion of which was ice, wherein François made magnificent steps—sufficed to bring us to the summit. After reaching the rocks we, roughly speaking, climbed straight up. The top was cairnless, and I have no doubt that we were the first to visit it.

Our meal was crowned with a bottle of the best red wine that the cellar of the Hôtel de la Grivola could furnish. It can generally supply something respectable, but the brand varies. In 1893 Torette was the thing to ask for. If anyone is in doubt what to demand I would recommend my plan to him. It is simple, and consists in beginning at the top of the list, which madam will, on request, write out for him, and trying the wines in order till he finds one that pleases. But to-day, alas! 'all is fortune.' When we returned to Cogne and

called for the same brand (we had carefully preserved the label) we were presented with a white syrup nearly as sweet as honey. Moral: Labels tell a tale of little meaning.

We descended a huge snow mamelon to a col now known as Col Paganini, and then by rocks and snow we went down to the Monei Glacier. Where we stepped from rocks to snow there were some five or six steps in ice, and here Guichardaz, who was immediately in front of me on the rope, seized the opportunity to give a hard jerk just as I reached the second ice-step. Naturally I shot down the ice-slope, to the amusement of the company; but a few forcible words from François—under cover of which I regained the steps—brought the culprit to a sense of his wrong-doing.

Once on the glacier we made for the Col Monei, and thence descended to the Val Piantonetto. There was a good deal of mist about, and we went so far *down* that

we had rather a long climb *up* to the Refuge. This Refuge (9141 feet) is well built and comfortable, and we would both of us express our gratitude to the Italian Alpine Club for the use of so pleasant a shelter.

The next morning we reached the Roccia Viva Glacier by way of the Bocchetta di Monte Nero,[1] between the Monte Nero and the Tête de Monei. When we reached the glacier Compton remained to sketch, whilst François, André and I made for the peak marked 3552 mètres (=11,655 feet) on the Italian Government map, and 3604 mètres (=11,825 feet) on Signor Paganini's. This peak I had set my heart upon. It shows well from the Cogne meadows—in fact, it affects rivalry with the somewhat higher Roccia Viva. It appealed too to me on other grounds. SS. Vaccarone and Martelli have in their excellent guide-book abolished the Roccia Viva Est. Its abolition certainly

[1] *Alpine Journal*, Vol. XIII. p. 120.



THE ROCCIA VIVA GROUP, FROM THE ROCCIA VIVA GLACIER.

simplifies matters. But I had longed for this peak for years. When Coolidge and I, in 1885, ascended the Tête de Monei, Signor Martelli claimed—and Coolidge and I from his description at once admitted that he claimed with justice—the first ascent of that peak, though he had climbed it as the Roccia Viva Est. Now, in many discussions with Coolidge I had always maintained the —shall I say?—autonomous existence of the Roccia Viva Est; and when the Tête de Monei turned out to be the peak claimed under that name, and our ascent of the same to be the second, instead of the first, I registered a vow to see by actual inspection of the top what peak 3604 mètres was like. Patience not a little had to be exercised, and so I venture, after climbing it, to name this peak, for which I so patiently waited, the Bec de la Patience.

We climbed it without difficulty. The summit is beautiful—a short snow-ridge of great loveliness with a glorious view, though

we saw only part of it, as clouds denied to us

> 'The long array of helmets bright,
> The long array of spears,'

which we ought to have seen in the great peaks of the Eastern Graians. The Tour St Ours looked shapely, the Monei Glacier very large, and our eyes commanded the most magnificent of Cogne's frozen cataracts, the icefalls of the Tribulation and Dzasset Glaciers.

On our way up we had seen several chamois and four ptarmigan, called albinos by the men. On the way down I paid some attention to the flowers which lit up the rocks here and there with their bright colours. Most beautiful was *Eritrichium nanum*, the most brilliant of forget-me-not blues. One tuft was worth the climb to see, a large cushion absolutely ablaze with blossom. The modest beauty of *Petrocallis pyrenaica* and the rose-flushed cup of *Ranunculus glacialis*

were almost equally attractive. These same three I had previously found in profusion on the Becca di Noaschetta. There were also *Chrysanthemum alpinum* and a *Cerastium.*

Before we reached the Refuge the weather had become bad, and thick mist and rain caused us considerable annoyance. Moreover, our provisions ran short—Guichardaz, who ought to have arrived in the evening, failed us. In the morning, as no Guichardaz had come, and we were foodless, we descended to the Muanda of Teleccio.

The herdsmen received us hospitably, and we breakfasted on milk and polenta. We were much amused with the chalet dog, who, under the mask of simplicity, concealed many knavish tricks. After he had made friends with us we found him searching the knapsacks with all the enthusiasm of a *douanier.*

A little after nine Guichardaz arrived.

We had, from the Muanda, seen him at the Refuge, and had sent up a boy to show him the shortest way down. He had really walked wonderfully well, considering his age, but his account of his adventures, his defence of his mistakes, his attempts to prove the care which he had bestowed upon the provisions under his charge, were ludicrous in the extreme. Volubility is hardly the word for his readiness,

'The full-flowing river of speech'

but faintly suggests his powers. François and André, as well as Compton and I, roared with laughter.

First he produced sundry eggs, which had been wrapped up in his pocket-handkerchief, showed them round, and said, 'You see they are not broken.' Then he held up a huge bottle of a gruesome blue complexion, made to hold paraffin, and explained to us that he had deposited a lira with the landlord of the inn at Perebecche as security for the restoration of this

precious vessel. Of the wine which it contained I can only say that it had come a long way, and that a little of it certainly went a long way.

Then the old man enlarged on his descent of the previous day. 'As I went down the valley I asked how far it was to Perebecche. "Four hours."' He then tramped a 'beau morceau' and inquired again. 'Four-and-a-half hours.' So he thought he had better return, but, being a plucky veteran, persevered. After that he spoke of his return. He came to the Muanda and knocked at several chalets, but could get no answer. He missed the one in which the herdsmen were. After that he seems to have gone up most of the smaller peaks in the neighbourhood. He would find it very cold, whereupon he would 'put himself to dance' for an hour. Then he would wander to some other point, and again 'put himself to dance.' These adventures of his were really a strong testi-

monial to his powers of endurance, for he is well advanced in years.

After a debate as to what we should do—it seemed too late to try a new way back to Cogne—we decided to descend to Pont Canavese, and regain Cogne by the Col Bardoney. We hoped to be rewarded with a full view of the peaks near that pass; a sight I had long desired, but on my two previous visits been denied by bad weather.

So we started down the Val Piantonetto. A little more than an hour below the Muanda there is a big grotto with water falling from the top at the end of it—an effective picture. The Scalari are decidedly interesting. Two and a quarter hours after starting we stopped for lunch. 'The place for a painter's camp' was Compton's description of the spot where we halted. A green meadow, a bubbling spring, the flashing torrent, and a noble framework of mountain walls here delighted us.

The most striking part of the vegetation

was the ferns. Everywhere their soft green soothed the eye, and many of them were of the hay-scented variety. Water, too, was everywhere, clear and cheerful-voiced. As we got lower, the vegetation gradually increased in richness. Hay perfumed the air, and drying chestnut foliage added its heavy fragrance. But the last bit of the descent to the Locana road was detestable. It is paved with cobbles, and the brooks take to the track at will. Result: exasperation. But as we neared the highway the streams talked more audibly. In the hot sunshine their eloquence became more persuasive. Who shall describe their sparkling freshness, their exuberant life, their deep-throated music? They reminded one that Vergil was born under the same sky. May such a scene as this be my refuge when age compels me to cry,

'Flumina amen silvasque inglorius!'

At length we reached Perebecche and its Cantina Reale. Boys from eight to seven-

teen were playing cards under walnut and chestnut trees. When Guichardaz had restored the gruesome-looking bottle and recovered his lira, we departed to Locana. As we trudged along, the sound of brooks, especially the big one by the roadside, was most delightful, and no treasures of the greenhouse could be more graceful than the myriads of ferns which everywhere overhung the water. We reached at 3.30 the Corona Grossa at Locana, where Compton had been well entertained some little time before, and were shown into a room with a balcony clothed with fig-trees. We afterwards drove down the Val d'Orco to Pont Canavese, where we found fair quarters at, as far as I can remember, the Corona Grossa.

The next morning we started for the Col Bardoney. There is now a fine carriage road for two and a half hours to the point where the road to Ronco and the Bardoney path separate. At that point the engineers were busy with a new bridge. About half

an hour up the Forzo Valley we stayed for breakfast by the side of a little stream. Here, as I reached back to fill a cup, I thought I must have crushed some aromatic plant, there was so sweet a scent. Another look discovered *Cyclamen europæum* nestling under fresh green ferns.

A little above Tressi there were beautiful pools of turquoise water in the torrent, and cranberries were not uncommon. Higher up bilberries were plentiful. As we drew near the Col the clouds came down, and completely hid everything from our disappointed eyes.

We went too far to the west, and also too high; but at last the Col was found. In the thick mist the guides asked Guichardaz, 'Where is the Col?' 'I cannot see it,' he replied in all good faith. Then, as we began the descent, the rain pelted us hard. We hurried down the little Bardoney Glacier, but, though we went at a good pace, we did not reach Cogne till after dark.

Tuesday was a gloomy day, as Compton left me, to my great regret; and Wednesday brought more rain, so that no start could be made. Thursday, however, treated us better.

We followed the Col Trajo route, seeing many fine views by the way, to the foot of the little glacier which lies under the Grivoletta, hitherto nameless. I propose to call it Glacier de la Grivoletta. The moraine was quite a nursery of *Campanula cenisia*. Up this glacier we made our way, not without amusement. It is steep, and boasts three big schrunds. These we had to cross. We then took to the rocks on the true right of the glacier. These were steep—at first smooth, afterwards loose. By them we reached the Col between this little ice-field and the Trajo Glacier, for which the name Col de la Grivoletta seems natural. This scramble, as we found it, could hardly be called easy. The rocks just to the east of the Col were most grotesque, like eagles' beaks in shape. We had a jump down to

the snow of the Col. Thence we followed the ridge to the summit of the Grivoletta, where we found my card of 1885.

One of my objects was to see whether it would be feasible to start from Cogne and ascend the Grivola by Mr Pendlebury's beautiful snow-ridge, but I am afraid it would be too long a task. Pession was very eager to try the ridge, but thought that it would be necessary to camp out somewhere in the rocks. Before we left the top clouds appeared everywhere, and I reluctantly gave up the intention of descending from the Col to the west of the Grivoletta, between the Trajo and Grivola Glaciers. I propose to call this Col, which I have twice reached but never crossed, Col des Clochettes. If an apology for so fanciful a name is needed, I would plead the music of the cow-bells from the Nomenon chalets, the most vibrating memory of my previous visit. We returned to Cogne by the Trajo Glacier and the ordinary Grivola route.

The next morning we descended to Aosta. On the way I succeeded in re-discovering some raspberries which I had noticed when going up to Cogne. They were dead ripe, and plentiful enough to have feasted an Alpine company. We did not cross the river at Aymaville, but kept the comparatively shady path on the right bank.

I cannot leave the guides without saying that Compton and I were highly pleased with both of them. They did their work well, and showed a keen interest in, and admiration for, the mountains.

Whilst I was looking out of the Hôtel du Mont Blanc at Aosta, I saw a lean cat in the road, and a swallow taking shots at the cat's head, apparently to see how near he could go without touching. My only discovery in Aosta itself was the following advertisement :—

TO THE GENTLEMEN ALPINIST.

In this storehouse you will find any gastromic speciality for the mountain as a Delicious salt pork and Ham.

I went to the Alps in 1893 with an open mind. New guide-books, new maps, a prospect of new expeditions, led me to examine a new centre for excursions. I journeyed to Liddes, on the St Bernard route, where the little Hôtel du Grand St Bernard is fairly comfortable. I walked up from Orsières with Slingsby and his companions, who had just concluded their brilliant campaign at Chamonix, and were on their way to the Grand Combin. This was a great pleasure, as it is very unusual to meet with members of the Club in the Graians.

The next day I took an interesting walk of about 3000 feet through woods—which reversed the poet's comparison, and were branched like mighty cloisters—and pastures to the ridge opposite Liddes on the west, and thence enjoyed a good view of the eastern end of the Mont Blanc group and the western face of the Grand Combin district. The peaks were fine, but memories

of Cogne were too strong. My resolution to try new ground vanished, and I went to Aosta.

André Pelissier was engaged, unfortunately, and no one arrived in his place in time to go to Cogne with François Pession and myself. On our arrival at the Hôtel de la Grivola we found a dozen officers at table, but madam explained that she had reserved a room in case Coolidge or Gardiner or I should arrive. So I was comfortably installed in the old house, which I much prefer to the modern magnificence of the Hôtel de Ville.

Just as I was starting on the following day, after engaging Joseph Jeantet to join us, Signor G. Bobba, who is so well known for his work in the Graians, and specially for his monograph on the Grand Paradis and Grivola, came to see me. We promptly fraternised. I invited him to join me, and he readily accepted.

We had a pleasant walk up to the

chalets of Monei, where the herdsmen were, as ever, very hospitable. A merry evening and a quiet night followed, and in the morning we started off in the direction of the Coupé de Monei—bent on an expedition which, as we rose in height, soon declared itself, in the existing condition of the glacier, too much for us—especially as, though François is a host in himself, we had not a normal force of guides.

Now was to be made apparent how difficult a thing it is to really know all about a district such as the mountains of Cogne. It was with wonder that I was brought to think that in our often-ransacked world still so much gold was left.

We had seen from the chalets a huge ridge in form something like the Alphubel (of course, on a smaller scale), which I could not properly place on the map. It had no name and no place—I say it

with shame—on any map except Signor Paganini's. Zeal in cutting out imaginary rocks, which appear in other maps in the wrong place, caused me, even with a photograph before my eyes, to cut this ridge short. In the photograph it is, naturally, much dwarfed. Well, when it became clear that our proposed expedition would not come off, because the Monei Glacier this year was a magnificent spectacle of séracs in a state of insurrection, it was decided to climb the crest which is marked on Signor Paganini's map 3444 mètres (=11,300 feet).

The climb was a pleasant one; good as François took it 'pour s'amuser,' as he remarked. I do not think he picked out the easiest way, but wisely gave me as much training work as came to hand. I am afraid that in one place I scandalised Signor Bobba by accepting help in the shape of Jeantet's proffered back. He was so anxious to aid me that I had not the

heart to refuse him. The ridge climbed, and a snow-crest topped, we saw plainly where Compton and I had descended in 1892, and I then and there proposed to call the ridge Cresta Paganini, and the col Col Paganini, as a compliment to my friend Signor Paganini, who alone has properly laid it down on his map. As Signor Bobba is one of Paganini's friends, and has a great admiration for him, the proposal was carried with enthusiasm.

By descending in the direction of the Coupé de Monei we were able to complete last year's pass. The first part of our descent was down as steep a snow-slope as one often meets with. Jeantet led and cut the steps. The bergschrund at the bottom caused some trouble, and then we marched up to the Coupé de Monei, at Signor Bobba's request. This climb clears up the Monei Glacier's problems. We descended to the Monei chalets, and thence to Cogne.

On August 21, Signor Bobba, with Casimir Thérisod, of Val Grisanche, and François and Sylvain Pession, of Val Tournanche (who arrived to join me as second guide on August 20), and I started for the Punta del Tuf (11,221 feet —Paganini). The peak is well seen from the hamlet of Valnontey, whence its apparent size somewhat astonished me. We followed the King's path to the Lauzon Hunting Lodge, and then made for the north-eastern ridge of the peak. This we climbed by rocks for the most part, though a patch of snow or ice occasionally cropped up. Signor Bobba and Casimir led the way. The top was reached without difficulty, and no trace of previous visitors could be discerned.

We then descended to the Col between our peak and the Grand Sertz. This was a pleasant scramble, as the rocks were firm though steep. But once on the Col an entirely different enterprise lay before

us. The whole of the face above the Glacier de Lauzon was evidently more or less — and I should say generally more than less—raked by falling stones. There were traces of them everywhere, and the glacier below was dark with their corpses.

After a long examination we decided in favour of a sort of flattened ridge on the face of the cliff in parts well worn by stones, but obviously the least dangerous part of the precipice between us and the glacier. By this we descended as hard as we could, though, as the footholds were some distance apart, progress was not as fast as could have been wished. I own that I cast an anxious look upwards now and again, but no stones fell. Step-cutting was necessary here and there, though not for long at a time.

At last we reached the glacier, and were out of range of anything that might fall. Then we halted to examine the face, and agreed that we had followed the best

route possible. We then traversed the Lauzon Glacier to the King's Hunting Lodge. A herd of chamois gave us much amusement. The way in which they dashed forwards, and afterwards back, through a torrent was a sight to be remembered. A single chamois then appeared close to us, and interested us much by his antics. We went down to Cogne.

On August 23 the same party left Cogne for the Piantonetto Refuge by the Col Teleccio. On the first part of our journey we enjoyed the light of a lantern. Afterwards we spent some time in a torrent, an occupation very stimulating towards the study of figures of imprecation. Finally, as the light improved, we found ourselves on the King's hunting-path in the Valeille.

After we had followed the path nearly to the moraine of the Valeille Glacier we took to the cliffs on our right, where, for our folly, we came across one or two nasty bits of rock-climbing, interspersed with

steep and slippery grass slopes — of all abominations, to my mind, the most abominable. We here repeated the experiences of the hero of whom the modern bard observes :—

> 'Then Tomlinson looked up and down, and little gain was there.'

Like Tomlinson, we looked up and down, found that we had gained nothing, and had humbly to make for the despised moraine. Nor was this all, for another party a few days later, seeing our traces, repeated our Tomlinsonian experiences. Eventually we reached the Teleccio Glacier.

On our way to the Col we looked at the Pointe de Valeille, but avalanche rehearsals were going on, and we did not feel tempted to turn aside. It was a long business to reach the usually easy pass. The glacier was cut and carved in a most unexpected manner; but the fact that the chasms were most beautiful to look upon did not

help us much, though it delighted our eyes. It was necessary to 'wind about and in and out,' and, as a consequence, progress was by no means rapid. We had to do obeisance even in the humblest fashion, as one huge chasm-bridge refused to be crossed—at least we did not venture to cross it—except on hands and knees.

We descended to some rocks a little on the Piantonetto side of the Col, and there devoured our victuals, and the view at the same time. We took about two hours, easy going, from these rocks to the Rifugio, and met with many flowers on the way. It was a curious proof of the warmth of the weather that summer that in the Rifugio (9141 feet) I found it necessary in the night to throw aside even my jacket, which I had taken off and spread over my shoulders. As for the sheepskins over one's legs, they were soon discarded. This, as far as my experience goes, is a very rare occurrence.

It is generally difficult to get enough wraps to keep oneself warm. I remember once at the little inn at Ferpècle, when visitors were scarce, making a raid through several rooms before I got enough blankets to keep the cold out.

On August 24 we all started together, but when we reached the moraine of the Roccia Viva Glacier we agreed to separate. Signor Bobba and Thérisod attacked the central peak of the Becchi della Tribulazione, which, notwithstanding its difficulties, they succeeded in climbing, whilst we went for the peaks which I have named the Gemelli della Roccia Viva. Anyone who examines Mr Compton's beautiful picture of the Roccia Viva group from the Monei chalets will, I think, recognise the fitness of the name. Seen from the Piantonetto, the peak we climbed is of 'a compelling dignity.' It did not take us long to get to the foot of our mountain—at the bottom of Coolidge and

Gardiner's big snow-couloir on the Roccia Viva — though the glacier was much crevassed for so generally amiable an ice-stream.

When we had reached the great snow-couloir we turned a little to our right and began at once to be interested. Perhaps memory plays us false, perhaps an undue affection for these mountains warps my judgment, but our ascent certainly seemed to me one of the most interesting in the Cogne group. When once we got to work on the rocks François was delighted. 'It is the Cervin without ropes,' he cried. It was, as he remarked, *quelque chose de chic* when once we had left the glacier. I apologise that I cannot give the minutes that the different parts took. I was so interested that I forgot times. Yet, I dare say, should anyone repeat the ascent, he will think my enthusiasm exaggerated. Be it so, yet our joy in a really excellent climb cannot be destroyed.

The rocks were always good. Once both guides went up and left me behind. Thus are tiros raised. Haul away and up goes the imbecile. I shouted, 'Wait a bit!' not being minded to lose the enjoyment of the climb. 'Is all things ready and all things neat?' 'Certainly.' So I leisurely, being unable to reach the first foothold on my left, set my back against one side of the chimney and my feet against the other, and so worked my left foot on to the appointed hold. All goes well. Gently does it. By this time I had reached the men.

Occasionally, like a flash of sunlight, little tufts of Alpine flowers lit up the rocks with a shy smile. Then the guides spoke of the delights of the Matterhorn from Val Tournanche; and how it could be done without the help of the fixed ropes. You will recollect 'This is the Cervin sans cordes.' Oh, it was like a glimpse of youth again for one with more

than the good Kent's years on his back.

At last we got to the final rock. Up went François, not without an effort. Then I followed, with Sylvain's help minus much of the skin of my knees. But is it not thus that one 'amasses souveneers' on a rock peak? The height given on Signor Paganini's map is 11,776 feet. The chimneys were the great feature of the climb.

And the view? Splendid. We looked down the Valnontey to Cogne, but that did not so much impress us; a grander sight held us spellbound, for we saw how the mountains grow dark to meet the onslaught of their grim assailant, even as the face of a man darkens at the approach of his foe. The sky was a blue black. A heavy thunderstorm was evidently approaching fast. It would ere long be upon us. Prompt departure was absolutely necessary. Short time was there, ye well may guess,

for musing or debate. Even now the recollection costs me a cruel pang. There was the other 'twin' hard at hand. But no—we dared not wait. Nothing remained for us but to retreat with all speed. So five minutes was all we spent on the top. Yet I do not think that any view from a summit in the Cogne district will live longer in my memory. As I recall that day, the shadow of the storm, as it gathered its forces together, darkens the whole group with its gloomy majesty; and I doubt if all the splendour of sunshine and cloudless skies impresses one as much as the sombre glory of the approaching tempest.

We descended at our best pace—Sylvain first, François last. One or two hard places we avoided, partly by a couloir to the east; and when the lightning began to flash and the thunder to roar we were getting near the great snow-couloir by which Coolidge and Gardiner, with the two Almers, as-

cended the Roccia Viva. When we were once in the couloir everybody went at his best pace, regardless of slips. I tumbled several times, but picked myself up as quickly as possible, and went at it again. *Quid multa?* We reached the shelter of a friendly rock, and, the axes having been planted a little way below us, we awaited the passing of the storm.

The lightning was magnificent, and I was thankful to be in a position of comparative safety. In time the storm flashed and roared itself away, and then we started for the Bocchetta di Monte Nero. So completely have the climb and the storm dominated my memory that I cannot remember when or where we took our meals. In about an hour from the Bocchetta we reached the Rifugio, at times much astonied by stones that noisily leapt down the rocks to our left.

On the 25th we all left together for Cogne by the Col Monei. As I have

explained in the *Alpine Journal*,[1] we varied the ordinary passage by climbing a rock-ridge to the west of the ordinary route, and striking the watershed about twenty minutes off the Col proper. We thus avoided the couloirs, in which, to judge by what we heard and saw, the stones had certainly been called early. The Monei Glacier, as I have said before, was in an unusual state of chaos this year, but we did not meet with any great difficulties. We aimed for the foot of the Cresta Paganini, whence an hour and twenty minutes' step-cutting on the part of Casimir (we were all five on one rope), who was leading, carried us to easy ground. Part of our route was subject to stones, which obviously sometimes fell in considerable numbers from the Cresta Paganini. As the steps were in ice, any demonstration on the part of the stones was much to be deprecated. Fortunately, we were

[1] *Alpine Journal*, Vol. XVI. p. 508.

there early in the day, and they let us alone.

After a friendly call on the herdsmen at Monei we went down to Cogne. This route is now quite rich in memories. Here you jump a torrent; here is the place where Compton stayed to sketch; here in ages past Baker and I met and fore-gathered with two friendly garde-chasses; here they relate the pitiable history of the donkey that fell over the precipice; here is found the most delicately-coloured *Aster Alpinus* I know; here in a late season the whole mountain-side is ablaze with rhodo-dendron.

My time was now running out, and it remained to choose a route to Aosta which should give us an interesting scramble on the way. I decided to take the Col Trajo, and try the Punta Crevasse by the ridge. This peak was first climbed by Messrs Coolidge and Gardiner in 1889 on their way from Cogne to Aosta, but they did

not follow the ridge, on which are many rock-towers; of which one may say with truth—

'A wild and warlike group they stand.'

We had a beautiful morning, made the climb up from Epinel with interest, and struck the ridge a little above the Col Trajo, on which a small herd of bouquetin were reposing. Then we turned to the left, and ascended without difficulty till we came to the first of the towers. The character of the work was then completely altered. Up and down over the towers we clambered, the climbing being always interesting, though the rocks were too rotten to give the delights we had enjoyed on the Gemelli della Roccia Viva.

Time after time, at the second or third trial, the rock came away in one's hand; but distrust begat prudence, and no serious trouble resulted. François would go ahead to the full extent of the rope, and I would

shout, 'You have got all the cord!' 'Two feet more!' he would cry, as I crept a pace forward. Then, out of sight of both guides, I followed round rotten ledges, distrustful, but not discontented, for by this time I had begun to consider our ascent by the ridge a kind of triumph. 'They went below,' I shouted to François. 'We shall do it by the ridge, eh!' 'Yes, monsieur, I think so,' he would reply. Then a chamois attracted our attention, and stones from the guides. He was quite close to us on a big lateral spur. We were amused, and he, no doubt, saying to himself, 'What fools these mortals be!' escaped unhurt, little recking that the men were jeering him in the same style.

The climbing was never really easy—the rocks were too rotten—but it was always interesting. As we climbed tower after tower, 'All the gendarmerie of the province are here,' one of us remarked. Then we came to the last two towers. These

we turned a little below their summits on the west side, and at last, after an exacting scramble, we reached the top. Now human nature being what it is—and the makers of Climber's Guides—I speak personally—are sufficiently human—I am bound to own my chief delight was that we had climbed the ridge because the guide speaks of numberless rock-teeth which force the climber from the ridge on to the face.

We found on the summit (10,850 feet—Paganini) two little cairns, which sufficiently attested Coolidge and Gardiner's ascent, though we could not find their cards. We then enjoyed a pleasant meal, and surveyed the world. How splendid was the Grivola! Pendlebury's snow-ridge looked like a fairy path to heaven, and one of the greatest delights was to climb again in memory the ridge from the Col de Belleface which Baker and I had conquered in 1881, though in those days we

called the pass, with avuncular respect, 'Col de Mesoncles. It was a glorious day. Little does the tourist who travels by Epinel and its green meadows suspect how beautiful that village looks from 10,850 feet. Often as I had passed Epinel, never before did I properly appreciate its pastures, its river, and its pine-woods.

At last it was necessary to make a move, and we decided to descend by our ridge route, instead of taking the easier way which Coolidge and Gardiner had followed in their descent. We went at a fair pace, and in due time were enjoying the glorious view of the Grivola from the Gran Nomenon chalets. Probably there is no more splendid near view of a great peak to be found in the Alps.

'Like wealthy men that care not how they give,' these remote and little-visited cowsheds throw in glorious views of the Aiguille du Géant, the Grandes Jorasses, and the Grand Combin.

I would conclude this paper with the remark that François quite fulfilled my expectations — that he would prove a first-rate guide—while Sylvain was always cool, collected and capable.

CHAPTER VII

1895—Bad Weather—Val Tournanche—M. Vernet—Cogne—Chalets of Monei—The Tour du Grand St Pierre by the West Ridge—Bitter Wind on the Descent—The Rifugio Piantonetto—I Gemelli della Roccia Viva, Western Peak — Hasty Descent—Locana—Ronco—Col de l'Arietta.

'What's new to speak, what new to register?'
Shakespeare, SONNET 108.

SUCH is the question I expect most of my readers will be ready to ask. And what is the answer? The Tour St Pierre by the west ridge, and the first ascent of the western peak of the Jumeaux de la Roccia Viva — or, to appease the precisian, I Gemelli della Roccia Viva. I hardly know with what face to appear once again as the narrator of new ascents in the Eastern Graians. But if the fact that

'Love is love for evermore'

be any excuse for an undying passion I may plead it as mine. Even the far greater glories of higher groups leave me still a worshipper of the Grand Paradis and his brethren. Not that I have not had passing passions for other mountains. 'Tis true that this year I sought a comparatively new love; but

> 'If she be not so for me,
> What care I how fair she be?'

We went to the Oberland—my friend P. E. Lord and myself, with François and Sylvain Pession, of Val Tournanche—but wind and sleet prevented us from completing the ascent of one of the hitherto unclimbed peaks of the Fusshörner after we had surmounted a magnificent chimney. Our rope was 100 feet, and was just long enough to enable François, after he had climbed the chimney in faultless style, to haul us up one by one. Then came

a strong wind, allied with eye-searching sleet, which nearly blew François off the ridge. The sleet changed to snow, the snow to rain, and we returned wet through to the Bel Alp.

The next day was sunless and sad. We could wait no more; we went to Zermatt. I had not till that evening a very clear idea of what the 'Vulgarisation of the Alps' meant. The truth was, as truth has a way of being, so unpleasant that we left Zermatt the next morning at three, and crossed the Théodule on a perfect day.

It was a very pleasant change from the noisy, crowded, brazen-band-tongued street of Zermatt to the pastoral simplicity of the Val Tournanche. François invited us to take a glass of wine with some of his near relatives—very good wine too, made, so we understood, at Châtillon, in the vineyard of one of his wealthier kinsfolk.

We were glad to gratify him. It was a pleasure to both sides, and not, like greater meetings, unattended by the interchange of compliments—pleasant also.

From Val Tournanche, with Sylvain's mule harnessed to Sylvain's chariot, and with Sylvain himself for coachman, we raced downwards. On the way we learnt many things of the rural economy of the valley, and beheld the telegraph posts which François and Sylvain had hewn

> 'While on the steep
> The woods were in their winter sleep.'

So we sped to Châtillon—at times, perhaps, a trifle nearer the edge of the road than the fastidious would desire. But then, of course, Sylvain knew to an inch the wobble of the wheel. There we had the pleasure of meeting Dr F. W. Oliver, who was, like ourselves, on his way to Cogne. The crowd had vanished, and the true spirit

of mountain companionship had taken its place.

So by the night train to Aosta. Thunder and lightning preluded our departure, and pouring rain attended our arrival. I was much grieved to find that my old friend M. Vernet, of the Hôtel du Mont Blanc, was no more. On how many occasions had he welcomed me to that historic hostelry! Never shall I forget the day when the Courmayeur diligence arrived, crowded with passengers. 'Gentlemen, do not get down; I have not a room left,' was M. Vernet's prayer as the diligence drew up before his door. Dismay was general, and no one descended but I; touching my old friend and host on the shoulder I said simply, 'I have arrived.' Ah, M. Yeld, it is you? You shall have my own room.

We found the Mont Blanc as excellent as ever. Though 'non omnia possumus

omnes,' Carlo, the waiter, made a gallant effort to reach that ideal. The next day we were detained by weather, but on the morrow repeated the old programme—drove to Aymaville and walked to Cogne. We arrived in the early evening, and, looking back, saw Mont Blanc unclouded at the end of the valley.

Madame Gérard welcomed us with effusion, and was good enough to say that I always brought 'bonheur'—a statement which, as sixteen people sat down to dinner on more than one evening after our arrival, seemed at anyrate temporarily true. It was a greater satisfaction to see that almost every visitor—not the English only—was provided with the *Climbers' Guide*. To Cogne, at anyrate, knowledge comes, even if wisdom lingers.

On the afternoon of August 18, taking with us Joseph Jeantet, of Epinel, as porter, we started for the chalets of Monei, which

we reached in normal time. Hospitality we found as a matter of course. I thought the cows seemed fewer in number than usual, and learnt on inquiry that, owing to the dry summer, not only were there ten cows less than usual, but that the herdsmen intended to descend on August 26. I cannot with any face talk of the view, or, indeed, of anything else connected with these chalets, after so many visits to them.

But one fact I must not forget. Amos was not the only herdsman prophet, for when I talked to our host of the weather he said, 'Oh, it will be fine, but the wind will be strong.'

Though, good traveller, thou art not expected to 'hovel thee with swine,' yet this summer the mountaineer's bed was where goats had couched. Nor were we without a share in the troubles which the dry season had inflicted on the herdsmen, for the wild hay was very small in quantity,

though its piercing qualities had not suffered in the least; indeed, what was wanting in bulk was made up in piquancy. I almost doubt whether one or two bits are not in my legs still. During the night there was the usual *émeute* amongst the cows, whereby sleep was slaughtered. But then the climber, of course—

'Must make content with his fortunes fit.'

At 1.48 the next morning, August 19, we were off, with a glorious moon to light us. After two hours' work up the moraine we halted to put on the rope; passed a little above the foot of the Cresta Paganini, where François did considerable step-cutting; and in 3 hrs. 55 mins., without any hurry, reached the Col de Monei at 6.10.

As we breakfasted the wind was so sharp that François stamped up and down most of the time as he was eating his breakfast. The sun had little power, though we went

up some feet out of our way to get the benefit of his rays. At 6.50 we started for the Tour St Pierre by the west ridge, and so closely did we stick to our work that the watch was never looked at till we were close under the summit. François' climbing as leader was perfect, and Sylvain was not inferior in his work as rearguard, the order being François, I, Lord, Sylvain. Jeantet had descended to the Rifugio. How shall I characterise our work? There is—to the credit of mountaineers very rarely—the ascent taciturn, when, owing to circumstances of course beyond their control, such as rain or snow or wind, the climbers are in a state of active or passive bad temper. There is the progress jocund, when the way is not too difficult, the weather perfect, success certain, and a helpless porter furnishes the cause of wit in others. Then there is the climb hortative or interrogatory, according as 'Venez seulement,' 'Avancez



THE TOUR DU GRAND ST. PIERRE, ROCCIA VIVA, AND PUNTA DI GAY,
FROM THE GRAND PARADIS.

seulement,' or 'Etes-vous bien placé?' 'Avez-vous encore de la corde?' may be said to be the watchwords.

To-day's work fell most naturally under the third heading.

We scrambled over some towers and turned others; between them were patches of snow and ice, some of considerable size. At least two of these were so steep as to require care, and in one place Lord and I found ourselves astride on the beautifully curving ridge. Our enjoyment would have been perfect if the north wind had been less keen; but after all it did us one good turn, as it drove away all cloud curtains and gave us unforgetable views of the great peaks in the distance north and west. And, though 'la bella Italia' had discarded her Coan robe for a less diaphanous vesture, the Viso asserted himself majestically, and fully justified Vergil's choice of him for immortality.

In one place between two towers there seemed to be a gulf that would take a fearful time, but there was luckily a sort of narrow isthmus between them, at first unseen. At last we arrived on the Pic de Retour, so pluckily reached by Dr Baretti and his companions in 1865. This I had always anticipated to be the crisis of the expedition. We did not actually—though very nearly—ascend to the top of the Pic, but turned it on the Monei side by a by no means easy bit of snow work. In the earlier days of mountaineering the passage would undoubtedly have been considered difficult, and failure to pass it no slur upon a climber. The Pic du Retour once behind us, I began to think success assured, but still we were a considerable time before we reached the top. In our anxiety not to get too much to the left (that is to say, to avoid Mr Pendlebury's route) we kept too much to the right, and finally reached the summit from

the south rather than from the west. About three minutes from the top, as it turned out afterwards, we came to a difficult rock face, and were treated to a splendid piece of climbing by François.

Before we started from Cogne, François had with much mystery exhibited to us certain wedges of wood which he proposed to take. It was something new in my experience, and I assented, little thinking that they would ever be of use. My good friend François, like most men, has his harmless foibles, an affection for a certain air of mystery being one of them. Well, once again the unexpected accomplished itself. Two of the wedges were carefully inserted in crevices of the rock by François, and then taking off his sack, and assisted by Sylvain with shoulders, ice axe, and exhortation, in nine minutes he had by a strong effort disposed of the difficulty. We were then hauled up one at a time,

making pretence to climb, and struggling with might and main. Personally I enjoyed it, though I did leave behind on the last rock a good deal of the skin of my knuckles.

We found the time on reaching the summit to be 12.6 p.m.—that is to say, we had taken 5 hrs. 16 mins. from the Col, with no halts worth speaking of. Say 5 hrs. actual climbing. We had been too busy to think of taking times on the way up; in fact, as I said before, the watch was never looked at till we got to the difficult place three minutes from the top. The wind was keen, and did its best to molest our meal; but we protected ourselves as well as we could behind the cairn, and rather crowed over our success, though I much desired the genial warmth which Coolidge and I had been favoured with in our ascent of 1885.

At one o'clock we left, having decided

to descend by the usual route, the north ridge. A very few minutes showed us that a serious task was before us. The wind was bitterly cold, and plenty of snow was plastered in the rocks. On a fine warm day this route is enjoyable. To-day —well, I liked it so little that I persuaded the guides (Sylvain was now leading, I next him, Lord next me, and François in the place of honour) to leave the ridge and try to our right. Here we were a little, though not much, better off. Sylvain went back to the ridge at the point where the snow or ice-slope abuts on the rocks. He cut one step, and then a renewed debate resulted in his again climbing down to the right. I thought of what the couloirs on the Valeille side would be like this year, and resolved to fight against that route at anyrate, but I did not like the prospect of cutting across to the ridge of the slope in the teeth of the wind. François after-

wards owned that he had had serious fears that we should be benighted.

After a détour Sylvain returned to the snow about one-third of the way down the snow-ridge. By this time the wind was much fiercer, and the chances of our getting to any sleeping quarters for the night were rapidly growing less. It did not seem safe to try any of the couloirs below us, and the quantities of stones below the usual route to the Valeille Glacier were a plain warning; so it was decided, on my earnest advocacy, to make a traverse to the usual snow-ridge, and descend to the Monei Glacier by the rocks on the further side of the Col between St Pierre and the Tour St André.

It was bitterly cold, and the wind, now almost a gale, blew the dry snow about with a pitiless perseverance. Sylvain, who had to cut the steps, had a very unenviable task. His beard was soon full of ice; I, as I moved

slowly, was nearly frozen, while Lord was little better off behind a big rock. Patois here was fast and furious as the wind itself, and what greater sign of difficulty can be looked for? The dry snow, which seemed at times to be illuminated, cut like hail, and filled our eyes and ears. At last Sylvain reached the snow-ridge, I joined him and was untied, and Lord and François hastened across. The descent to the Col was then soon accomplished.

I now discovered one thumb to be partially frost-bitten, but hard beating and rubbing restored it. My companion had only saved his hands by continual beating. Once on the Col we were in peace, for the gale was only local. We then went down the easy rocks west of the Tour St André to the Monei Glacier. At the foot of the rocks we came upon a big bergschrund, and much time was spent in finding a route across it; but of this we recked little, as here the

wind ceased to torment us, while the sun warmed us comfortably. While Sylvain was at work I dozed off several times; the last time I was roused by the rattle of the huge icicles he was demolishing. A big stone or two came down, but only in a half-hearted sort of way.

Once across the bergschrund we made for the Col Monei, and rejoining our tracks of the morning, just before 8 o'clock reached the Rifugio after a day of 18 hrs., about 16 of which were devoted to work. At the Rifugio we had the pleasure of meeting S. Vigna and his companions, who were carrying out a most successful campaign without guides.

This route by the rocks is distinctly the easiest in *descending* from the St Pierre, and was again followed by Messrs Oliver and Hiatt Baker with Alex. Burgener a few days later on their way over the mountain from Val Piantonetto to Cogne.

Let me here reply to an objection which I have heard made by some who have climbed the Tour St Pierre: 'Yes, the St Pierre is a fine mountain—what there is of him; we would there were more. Well, let his detractors make the ascent by the west ridge, and they will find that there *is* more of him.

Monday was a day of rest. The morning we devoted to the torrent, the afternoon to laziness. In the evening Jeantet returned from Locana. He had been sent for wine and meat; he brought us vinegar and lard. But then he appreciated the vinegar; and as for the lard, 'twas all his fancy painted it, and even the strongest expressions of public opinion troubled him little.

On Tuesday, August 21, François, Sylvain and I left the Rifugio at 4.45 a.m. to try the western and higher point of the Gemelli della Roccia Viva, which we had been

forced by a thunderstorm to leave unattempted, after ascending the eastern point in 1893. At starting the men wished to follow the Bocchetta di Monte Nero, but I, recollecting how steep it was, begged them to take the route round the Monte Nero himself, a bit of foresight on which I afterwards heartily congratulated myself. We found the Roccia Viva Glacier much more troublesome than last year. It seemed to me to have shrunk considerably. If the mountains were abnormal in 1893, in 1894 they were still more abnormal; and when we got near the foot of Coolidge and Gardiner's couloir, on the east of the Roccia Viva, it was a perfect object lesson in teaching the truth that no two mountains differ more than the same mountain in different seasons. The snow had shrunk much; instead of spotless white it was a dirty grey, and its centre apparently a stone shoot in full working

order. That we might be under no mistake as to the state of things, a good round missile whizzed well out of it as we gazed.

Then we scrambled hastily for shelter, and went up a steepish ice-slope in unusually quick time. Once under a big rock, I believe the very one under which we sheltered from the thunderstorm of 1893, we halted to see how many stones were likely to fall, and seized the opportunity to take a meal. While we ate we saw S. Vigna and his party, without guides, arrive on the glacier by the Bocchetta di Monte Nero. They, like ourselves, soon found that the ice was by no means complaisant. We had before this seen a chamois, who at our shouts,

'Stretching forward free and far,'

sought the wild heights of the Monte Nero.

Our meal finished, we started upwards, and, though I don't like being hurried, I here made no objection, but went as hard as I could. We crossed several places, more or less dangerous, at times at anyrate, from falling stones, and then found ourselves on the steepest part of the mountain.

One hard place still comes back to me at intervals, for here François, having himself got up with a great effort and with all the help Sylvain could lend him, when I called out to him—he was then above me, waiting to help me up—'Est-ce que je puis me fier à la corde?' replied 'Un peu.' As he is an absolutely truthful man I made what effort I could to put as little trust in the rope as possible, but once certainly I hung by it and a bad handhold. I should explain that the ascent was not directly upwards, but slantwise.

After this bit, when we were standing together, Sylvain remarked, 'Nous faisons tout ce qu'il y a de plus difficile.' François twice mounted on Sylvain's shoulder, and, to illustrate how absorbed he was in his work, I may relate that in one place, when I was standing close to him on a narrow ledge, and he was helping Sylvain up with the rope, he took a small handful out of my beard, which he had unawares included in his grip.

At 10.45 we were on the top, *i.e.*, in six hours from the Refuge, of which probably something over an hour had been spent in halts. When we arrived I laid my hand on the topmost rock, then Sylvain climbed it to put a few stones together, and then I mounted it in haste by way of Sylvain's back. The view was marvellous, but, pile on adjectives as one will, a true description is still unattainable. To my Bec de la Patience plants of 1892

I must add *Linaria alpina, Saxifraga oppositifolia, Hutchinsia alpina, Geum reptans.*

But we had little time for the view, as the men were anxious to be off. The wind was bone-searching, and the descent by our upward route distinctly not desirable. Thus we only spent fifteen minutes on the top. Before I moved François had let Sylvain down on the Roccia Viva side, and received back the satisfactory news, 'Nous sommes sauvés.' It was so, fortunately; but the descent was not easy. The rocks were snow-plastered, and the inclination somewhat steeper, I should say, than the north ridge of the St Pierre. Hands suffered, but in twenty minutes we reached the top of the snow Col between our twin and the Roccia Viva. Below the Col in the warm sunshine we enjoyed a meal.

Ah! yes, the meat was potted bubblyjock,

and the wine Moschato; but then success tempered alike the over-sweetness of the one and the over-spiciness of the other. The men talked, to my delight, of 'la bella Italia,' 'la bella vista.'

We left this spot at 12. To briefly describe our route I may say that we descended on the edge of the great couloir, very close to the rocks of the peak we had climbed, and we wasted no time, but went at full speed. In one place I was struck by a stone on the arm, but without any serious result, though we quickened our pace and, rejoining our morning's route above the big rock, scampered along the ice-steps and out on to the glacier at a run down a slope that on ordinary occasions I should have treated with comparative respect. On the way we crossed two bergschrunds. At a quarter to one we were well out on the glacier—*i.e.*, in three-quarters of an hour from our lunch place. There were no difficulties worth

mentioning, at anyrate in the first part of the descent.

When we got near the Bocchetta di Monte Nero I carefully examined Compton's panorama, and can pronounce it absolutely correct. Every pinnacle of rock was in its place, every curve of sky-line snow accurately indicated. François had said on the summit, 'If we are on the glacier by 4 o'clock I shall be content.' And content we were long before 4 o'clock.

The weather was splendid. Indeed, François exclaimed, 'I have never seen so fine a day.' On the Col we remarked on the changes in the glacier since 1892, and leaving at 1.15 reached the Rifugio at 2.5, keeping up something of the pace we had now grown accustomed to. As we made a halt of a few minutes to take off the rope —we had with us two long ones, one of 100 and another of 120 feet—François delivered himself of the remark, 'There are some who

mock at having two ropes. They are dix mille fois bêtes.' Remembering what the rope had done for us this summer, I fully agreed with him.

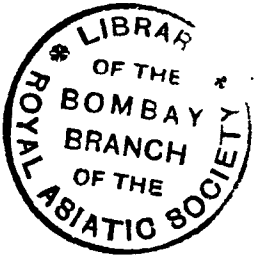
The next day we went down the Piantonetto valley to Locana, and found the flowers as conspicuously plentiful and beautiful as ever. Near Locana we met S. Ratti, the editor of the *Bollettino* of the C.A.I., with whom we had a very pleasant chat.

We returned to Cogne by way of Ronco, where the accommodation agreeably surprised us, and the Col de l'Arietta, halting at Brouillot to see the splendid sight of a sudden storm passing over the Grivola. Our last day was spent on the Pousset ridge and the Pointe du Pousset, where, with the famous view in all its perfection before us, we made our adieux to the great peaks.

I will conclude by saying that, though

nothing is more to be deprecated than the arrival of the tourist multitude at Cogne, I was delighted to see there so many and so friendly mountaineers. Who knows of how many climbers history will in future summers have to relate—

'Though Zermatt's glories did his youth engage,
He sought the Graians in his riper age?'



CHAPTER VIII

The Weather in the Alps in 1896—Col de Pila—Cogne to Courmayeur—Triolet Hut—Mountain Sheep—First Ascent of the Pointe du Piolet (12,071 feet)—Toilsome Snow—La Vachey—The First Ascent of the Aiguille de Tronchey—Near View of the Grandes Jorasses—Return to Courmayeur—My Guides.

WHEN the mysteries of battels were explained to a Freshman at Oxford, in my day, I remember that one piece of information usually vouchsafed was that fagots included cream. Let me hasten to inform my readers that the title 'The Aiguille de Tronchey' includes all the climbs that the weather allowed me to accomplish in 1896. 'All,' you will say to me; 'I know not what ye call all.' 'Is it ten, or twelve, or twenty?' Alas! no; 'tis three!

My first impulse, on sitting down to

write this paper, was to make a sort of anthology of abuse, a catalogue, in fact, of expletives, suitable for firing off at intervals, and copy one or two chosen morsels in the middle of each page, with the certainty that they would come in naturally and meet—if sufficiently strong—with the approval of all mountaineers whose fortune led them to the Alps in 1896. But I gave it up, through sheer inability to find words adequate to express my feelings on the subject. Never before have I noticed such poverty in our native tongue; but I feel that in this failure I shall have the sympathy of you all.

We were attended by a bad omen at the very outset, for the bigger of the two horses lay down just as we were starting, smashed the shaft, and generally delighted himself; but when, after an hour's interval, as the driver was burrowing for wine in a wayside inn, he meditated a second edition

my patience reached its limits. Just as he was tucking himself in with a languorous enjoyment I bestowed the stick upon him with such effect as to drive out of him the passion for acting as though he were a buffalo at large. Then the wind rose, the rain asserted its right to bully us, and we were thoroughly drenched. Falls of rock lay thick on the road, our lamp was literally blown to pieces, and, after quite an eventful journey, which the ladies of the party supported with admirable patience, we accomplished the passage of the St Bernard; and, after a due amount of drying at Aosta, where we were joined by my guides (François and Sylvain Pession of Val Tournanche), ventured to Cogne. One little incident I should like to mention, as it is characteristic of travel in Italy as I have generally found it—the douaniers of St Rémy treated us with the most courteous consideration.

About 4 o'clock on the morning of August 10, when half-dressed, I was solemnly invited by François to walk as far as the balcony and inspect the weather. I did so, and said, rather to my own surprise as the words escaped me, 'Very good. Let us start.' Was then the prospect cheering? Nothing of the sort. Did I expect a fine day? Nothing of the kind. My determination was due partly to the fact that I thought I was expected to say, 'Let us go to bed again,' and partly to the recollection that on the previous morning the appearance of the weather was exactly the same, and yet in the afternoon I had persuaded myself that we might possibly have succeeded.

But why relate how we made a third-rate pass, albeit of over 10,000 feet. The flowers would have been glorious if it had been fine, and as the mountains were wholly new both to the guides and to my-

self, if only the sun had smiled on us we should have had a delightful day. Though I have never felt inclined to say, with Shelley, 'Pansies let my flowers be,' yet to-day, with the encumbering moisture of the snow upon them, they pleaded so pathetically for favour, that I joined the ever-increasing band of their admirers. As for the forget-me-nots, no blue that ever shone in heaven or earth—or even in the poet's dream—could surpass their loveliness. After leaving the chalets of Arpisson, the view from which is famous, we struggled over our pass—the Col de Pila—in a paltry snowstorm, and descended on the Grauson side in wan waves of mist at a great pace. It may be quite true, as a philosopher reminded me not long ago, that—

> 'Patience and Perséverance
> Made a bishop of his reverence,'

but all they did for us was to send us

home peakless. And yet one sight I saw that noon was worth the discomfort of a dozen snowstorms. As the summits were wreathed in cloud, and the upper part of the Glacier de Grandcroux swathed in grey mist, the torrent of the Valnontey suddenly appeared, as it were out of heaven, and fell from height to height in a most amazing fashion. The atmospheric effects, by some strange process, greatly exaggerated the steepness of the Valnontey. It was as though an extra stanza had been added to the 'Witch of Atlas.'

Though I had not to complain of the transformation of my bedroom into a Necropolis, as some vivacious humorists had hinted might happen to me, yet, as the old gentleman at the general store remarked, 'You cannot, milor, remain at such a place as this in such weather.' So from Cogne we fled to Courmayeur, and on the way actually derived some benefit

from the new snow. The Nomenon shot up through the mist with an audacity that delighted us; the majestic Grivola flung back at intervals her clinging raiment, and revealed to us the argent splendours of her northern ridge and east face; and as for the Péteret, as ever and again a torn cloud streamed from his rugged head, he looked as though, with a little favour from the handicapper, he might compete with the Matterhorn. At Courmayeur, amid the Capuan allurements of the Royal, we gradually recovered our spirits.

On the afternoon of August 13, François and Sylvain Pession and I left Courmayeur with the intention of sleeping at the Triolet hut and attempting the ascent of the peak which lies between the Col du Piolet and the Col de Talèfre, and rejoices in the words 'No Information' in M. Kurtz's excellent *Climbers' Guide.* If it be the fate of the sheep so often described as

patient of wrong to play 'the aggrieved,' yet he can occasionally, when alarmed, play the aggressor with much effect. I remember to have heard a story of a boy, possibly of Numidian descent, though I cannot affirm it, who was asked to write a character of Jugurtha. He said, 'If left in peace Jugurtha is a lamb, but if roused he is a lion. The fault, therefore, is with those who rouse him.' So doubtless with the sheep whose business it is to get a living on the slopes below the Triolet Glacier. The fault lay with us. We roused them, and in consequence they rushed ahead of us, sent down stones which caused us considerable danger, and compelled us to climb up by a route much more difficult than the ordinary one. They were obviously 'misonéistes,' and hated anything in the shape of a traveller.

I should imagine that in a summer like that of 1895 most of the slopes above the

Triolet Glacier would be raked by falling stones, but in 1896 the snow was piled so deeply in most places that all such missiles were imprisoned. The glacier at first was fairly good, but as we ascended the snow grew gradually worse, though no crevasses worth speaking of troubled us. What did trouble me was that I could see no place where we could glissade with ease, or even with difficulty, on our return journey. As we drew near the actual foot of our peak the leader's work became more exacting, for here the snow was very soft, so Sylvain took François's place. With effort we made good our footing on the steep slope above the glacier, and when it was possible worked up the rocks. The snow was deep, and we often sunk in well above our knees—not to say armpits—when passing from snow to rock or from rock to snow.

Here and there we met with steep

narrow ridges of snow, and François, who had resumed the lead, was very careful to make certain of going up the exact centre of them, as it would have taken very little to start an avalanche—in fact, we saw several small ones, and I heard François mutter his dissatisfaction. But notwithstanding that the work was unpleasant nothing untoward took place, and we eventually reached the summit ridge. There are four little points to the peak, the one nearest the Col du Piolet being the lowest, and we were in some doubt as to which was the highest. The men pronounced for the second point counting from the Col de Talèfre (the third from the Col du Piolet). I was only too glad to get a decision, and offered no criticism. I have from subsequent inspection come to the conclusion that the guides were right.

We did not build a cairn, but at François' suggestion I left a sixpence in a crack of

the topmost rock. The way had been long, though the wind had not been cold; nay, the air had been warm, but on the top the gusts were keen. Yet I was content to remain there for the sake of the glorious view.

A world of mountains revealed themselves to us. Their number was endless, their splendour ineffable, and their names well known—or at anyrate should be so—to all climbers. And as—as I think has been observed before—it is difficult to add a charm to an oft-told tale, you will expect from me a decent reticence on this point. The guides were much interested, as this was their first visit to this part of the chain.

In the descent, which was laborious, we kept during the latter portion more towards the Col du Piolet than in the ascent, a plunge into snow up to one's armpits being no uncommon interlude. An occasional ejaculation of François' reminded me

of the birthday-book series of exhortations which I used to listen to with delight of old:—'Place well your feet.' 'Drive in your heels.' 'Derangé not the step.' 'Stand quite upright.' 'Good, very good.' I should say that his choice of route impressed me much. No one without a thorough knowledge of snow work would have ventured to leave the rocks where we did and take to such steep snow; for the snow next the rocks was rotten, and it was not till we had taken some steps that it inspired any confidence.

On arriving at the bergschrund, Sylvain sat down and shot across. I did the same, and went into the snow so deeply that my struggles almost dragged François over the chasm prematurely. Then we felt that all was well, after a little time rejoined our morning's route, and strolled into the hut, I being easily last, somewhere about 6 o'clock. I may here mention that we found so many

butterflies on the mountain that I thought of calling it the Pointe des Papillons, but the comparative insignificance of the peak turned the scale in favour of the less pretentious name.

I was aroused about 11 o'clock to find François suffering from snow-blindness, and though he made light of it, I am afraid he suffered a good deal. It was only after the application of raw veal on the morrow that he recovered. In the morning the valley was full of clouds, and we returned to Courmayeur. On the way we passed many Martagon lilies and the finest *Gentiana purpurea* I ever saw.

On our way up the Val Ferret I had been much attracted—'envasselled,' if I may be allowed a seventeenth-century word—by a beautiful peak in the ridge which runs from the Grandes Jorasses to the Aiguille de l'Evêque, and the guides had carefully examined it at my request. It is not marked

on M. Kurtz's new map, but appears anonymously in the *Climbers' Guide*, with a height of 11,483 feet.[1] Its obvious name from the glacier on its west and the chalet below was the Aiguille de Tronchey. The more I thought of it, the more I desired to climb it.

But though the peak delighted me and the guides were keen to tackle it, I did but snatch a fearful joy till we were actually on our way up it. 'Not Lancelot nor another' was to be favoured. It was, after all, to be ours.

The only question was the weather. On August 18 that was propitious, so we started for the new peak under the most gracious influences, for the ladies of my party accompanied us for some distance. We had tea among the pine-trees by the torrent, and the sun shone and the air was soft, and the water murmured pleasantly, as though

[1] Taken from Mieulet's map.



THE AIGUILLE DE TRONCHEY, FROM THE SLOPES OF MONT DE LA SAXE.

such things as snowstorms had retired from business altogether.

The ladies were so far Russophile as to accept my proffered slices of lemon, and, fanned by the tea's gentle stimulus, we discussed such obviously natural topics as the Col du Géant, which the ladies had visited on the previous day, as well as climbing in general, and 'furens quid femina possit' in particular. The true translation of these words I only discovered some time afterwards, when I learnt that a lady had had her bicycle carried by two porters over the Col du Géant. To what will not the accursed love of 'records' drive us?

At last Françols, perhaps a-weary of so frivolous a discussion, suggested that it was still some distance to our resting-place for the night, so we said good-bye and moved on lazily to La Vachey. The herdsman was a kindly host, and well pleased to entertain us. He pointed out to us a small flock of

sheep on the wild slopes of the Mont Gruetta. They are driven there for a sojourn of two or three months, during which time they must, as the Yorkshire phrase runs, 'fend for themselves.' But when he learnt our errand from the guides, he offered one more illustration of the lines, if I may adapt Mr Coventry Patmore—

> 'How strange a thing a climber seems
> To animals that do not climb.'

He took no interest in the sparkling spire—it is not, so far as I remember, visible from La Vachey—that was to be the goal of our enterprise. But he knew the signs of the weather, as men who have been much alone with Nature so often do. He warned us that an evil time would shortly be upon us. Nor was he deceived. The guides reposed on hay. I had the comfort of a clean though rough bed in the same barn, and slept well, the sound of the goat-tinkled bell notwithstanding.

A start was made at 2.40 a.m. with two folding lanterns. We went astray a little in the flat, marshy ground on the right bank of the torrent, scrambled through the forest and up the loose stones of a steep slope, occasionally a torrent bed, above it. At 4.48 we halted to wait for the light. At 5.57 we reached the edge of the snow, and went on, after a meal, at 6.32. We kept to the east of the Glacier de Tronchey, the ice of which we never touched at all; crossed a stream whose volume we were to find much increased on our descent; got up the steep rocks on the right of it, and at 7.30 put on the rope. We went on at 7.43, crossed the little stream several times —as far as my recollection serves—reached a sheltered place at 9.3, and after a slight refection continued the ascent at 9.47.

I much regret that I am not able to describe our climb stride by stride, hand-hold by handhold. The fact is that I am

never sufficiently ready with my pocket-book. There is always something more attractive to make one forget the taking of notes. Now a well-marked rock that involves the problem, When shall we get to it? now a glimpse of the torrent flashing among the pine-trees far below; now the rosy phantom of a cloud; now tiny but richly coloured blossoms,

'Like bright eyes of familiar friends,'

glowing softly in their crevice homes. But I forget; this is only in the Graians. It is not that I did not enjoy it; for though one's most thrilling memories are probably—in my case certainly—associated with steep ice-slopes, yet for continuous enjoyment what can beat a new route up steep rocks? The rocks *were* steep, the incidents of our ascent fairly varied, the leading of the guides admirable, and my satisfaction infinite, and yet I cannot describe the climb in detail. One

detail, however, I still recall — a frequent outcry on my part for halts. I was reduced to ask, 'Where are now the chamois?' (we had seen two—a perfect godsend), or to call attention to the view (oh, ancient but oft-recurring subterfuge!), or even to be so superfluous as to demand the time of the day.

By-and-by we got to very steep but very soft snow. François' legs are long, and his reach is amazing. Whether he heard me groan louder than usual as I struggled to get my leg out of the depths of one step into the abyss of the next so far above, I do not know, but he suddenly looked down and inquired quite effusively, 'Are the steps to your mind?' 'Well,' said I, 'they are a long way apart.' 'That's to prevent their being crunched out,' he answered; and then he regarded me with something of the school captain's glance when he superintends the little boys' foot-

ball and says to a novice, who would fain show the importance his opinion carries at home, 'Shut up jawing, and get into the scrimmage.'

At last, after passing some rocks, we reached the beautiful snow ridge which curves round northwards to the summit. François advanced carefully, mindful of the dangers of a latent cornice, peered over and saw all was well, while I held the rope tight. Sylvain and I followed, and at 12.4 we reached the top. A good shove from François placed my hands on the highest rock. I descended—on his head, by the way—and we sat down to enjoy our triumph. Now, too, we were in a position to appreciate the truth of an anonymous poet's words:—

'If you would know the mountain-peak,
How steep, how grim, how tower-like,
The green vale at its foot you seek,
With meads and forests bower-like:

It follows that to know the vale,
How soft it smiles, how sweetly,
The lordly mountain you must scale,
And sweep the vale completely.'

We had left the provisions below, and had brought so little wine to free our souls from human trammels that I was enticed into moralising—a crime which a hard climb after the excitement of success is over has occasionally a tendency to encourage. Can it be a form of self-satisfaction? Very likely. But do we not all at such times experience a strange, perhaps an exaggerated, sensation of sympathy for the peasants whose dwellings we see so far below us, when, as sometimes happens, our summit gives us not only the strong mountains and the eternal snows, but the village with its storm-battered roofs, softened by the twinkling sunshine, or the weather-worn hamlet with its fringe of pines? What is it which causes the stress of feeling that moves us so strongly? Not, I think,

our joy in their tiny cornfields or protecting forests, or the matchless green of their little meadows that not in vain desire the water-brooks, but that thrill of feeling born of sympathy for those who have toiled much and suffered much—that appreciation of the pathos of a life of struggle which Vergil would have given us in a 'lonely word.'

After all, the Aiguille de Tronchey is but a secondary peak, though I believe it to be considerably higher than the estimate given in the *Climbers' Guide.* The guides are, I may add, of the same opinion. Did I then repent the toil spent in climbing it? Emphatically no; for it was new; and the new peak, however inferior in mountain glory, after all supplies the doubt of eventual success, the possibility of adventure which no climb by a well-known route can provide. Not that I would be thought to depreciate the old peak. Nay! every fresh ascent adds to one's affection for it, but the satisfaction

derived is altogether different in character from that one enjoys on a new peak. We love not Juliet less when we read of Desdemona, but—

'As one lamp lights another, nor grows less,'

so we increase the number of peaks we know without lessening our affection for the peaks we have known.

I was once asked by a curious and fairly well-informed Italian miner whether a certain well-known English public man was married. 'Yes,' I replied, 'he has just wedded a lady who is very handsome and very rich.' 'Ah!' he rejoined, 'you cannot expect more than that from any woman.' Well, what can you expect more from a virgin peak than that she shall be very beautiful and very rich — in views; and of course I need not say difficult to conquer, as no doubt the bride above referred to proved herself to be.

We had glorious views, but a certain awe was upon us, for who can gaze at close quarters on the precipices of the Grandes Jorasses unabashed? Nor was it the sheer cliffs only which amazed us. Down them fell avalanches, many in number, hissing and hurrying—like Etarre's hand, small but cruel. I do not know that I have ever seen in the Alps a sight that impressed me more. Those terrible walls—

> 'In craggy nakedness sublime,
> What hand or heart shall dare to climb?'

I will not venture to say, whatever I may think, that they are absolutely impossible; but assuredly he who attacks them must make up his mind to say with Mezentius—

> 'Nullum in caede nefas; nec sic ad proelia veni.'

We departed at 12.50, after leaving our names in a bottle; and, going as hard as we could, reached the sheltered place, where

we had a meal at 2.11. I went my hardest, for the men were afraid that the snow might give under us, or the stones, like discontented guests, leave early. Certainly speed was the safest policy, though no stones as a fact molested us. If the stones were making the special effort so fashionable nowadays, at anyrate in advertisements, the descent would be distinctly exciting.

The little torrent which we crossed several times served as a sort of refrain to our climb. In the morning he had been fast bound in ice, but had now freed himself, and poured over the sheer rock face in quite an imposing little cascade. But though the spray played freely on my shoulders, I waited as patiently as Xanthippe's Socrates till François had descended to, shall I say, 'mid on,' and then escaped to the 'long field,' where Sylvain, who was doubtless revelling in the remark of his

fellow-countryman, 'Suave mari magno, was laughingly awaiting me.

At 4.50 we left the moraine for the grass, and, quitting it at 5.12, did not reach the Val Ferret road till 6.37, for we made up for our hurry above by taking it easy. Moreover, the bilberries were plentiful, and dead ripe. The guides went to La Vachey for our baggage, and I started across the marsh, where I found *Menyanthes trifoliata* in abundance. I sat down contentedly on a fence by the torrent and listened, on the confines of sleep, to its brawling. 'Be thankful for a very good climb' was about the English of it.

Then the guides came up, and all went well till we reached the church of Courmayeur. Here rain began; but what cared we? As I entered the Royal I heard the cheerful buzz of after-dinner conversation, but escaped to my room unespied, and, regarmented, supped in luxury. There was

a ball that night. They of the Royal had invited them of the Angel, and they (the Angels, I mean) did not go home till morning. But sleep was not therefore murdered, for Morpheus, the only god, so far as my observation goes, that writers in the *Alpine Journal* habitually mention, perhaps because they have so much need of him—Morpheus was too strong for Terpsichore's flute, violin, bassoon. I slept in peace.

It will have been clear from the preceding narratives how largely I have been indebted for success to my guides. I cannot speak too highly of them. But I should not have reverted to the subject here if it had not been that I wish to say a word or two about a statement of Mr Mummery with reference to guides in his most interesting and stimulating work, *My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus* (2nd edition, p. 111).

Amongst the younger men there are

none with whom one could associate on the old terms and with the old intimacy. The swarming of the tourist has brought with it the wretched distinctions of class, and the modern guide inhabits the guides' room, and sees his monsieur only when actually on an expedition. Cut off from the intercourse of the old days, the guide tends more and more to belong to the lackey tribe, and the ambitious tourist looks upon him much as his less aspiring brother regards his mule.'

Now, with this I cannot agree, so far at least as my men, François and Sylvain Pession, are concerned. They have been with me six and five seasons respectively, and I may certainly claim to know them well. If any men may be described as Nature's gentlemen, they may. I shall quote one remark of each of them in illustration of the fact that they are not like the modern mountaineer's lackeys, against whom Mr Mummery inveighs.

One day when I had finished my Capri Bianco too soon, François offered me some of their red wine, and when I objected that it would be robbing them for me to take it, he said, '*Mais nous voyagons en frère dans les montagnes, n'est-ce-pas?*'

On another day, when Sylvain and I were together in Val Tournanche, and regarding the Matterhorn, he said, '*Comme il impose silence, le Cervin!*'

These men cannot surely deserve such disparagement as Mr Mummery bestows on all the younger generation of guides. Nor do I imagine that these two men stand alone, though I fear there are many so-called guides who do not reach their standard of conduct and character.

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CHAPTER IX

1897—New Inn at Pont—The Rifugio V.E.—Mora—The Costa Parasseus—Bocchetta Goj—Becca del Deir Verd—The Becca di Monciair by the North Ridge—How the same Mountain differs in Different Seasons—The Arpisson Chalets—The View from them—The Tour d'Arpisson—A Fine Panorama—Return by the Grauson Valley.

'WHAT! another paper on the Grand Paradis group?' Gentle reader, I will not conceal from you that I am a trespasser on your kindness, if not on a field which younger men should cultivate. But there are reasons which I could lay before you which might plead for me. You should have been entertained to a narrative by a successor—nay, to two narratives by two successors—of Prometheus, that demigod who anticipated the triumphs of the Alpine Club in the frosty

range which it so soothes us to read of when the dog-star rages. (I admit, parenthetically, that he has not greatly raged of late.) You should have been regaled with great deeds on peaks whose very names strike a chill into the marrow of anyone who fears an imputation on his spelling. But here the kindest of readers breaks in upon me with the unanswerable question, 'Then why are we not so entertained and regaled?' Well, I cannot put the case more forcibly than in the words of a lady of great beauty and experience—'No one can be more wise than destiny.' Destiny prevented it. Of your kindness, blame destiny and forgive me.

I never enter one of the southern side glens of the great Valley of Aosta without a little thrill of satisfaction and expectation. So many happy memories haunt them, and there is even yet something for the lover of new routes to be found there. Last year my friend Dr Tempest Anderson and I,

after a few rain-marred days at Courmayeur, descended with sudden resolution to Villeneuve, where, by the way, we met with clean accommodation and reasonable prices at the ancient inn of The Stag.

The guides, thanks to the telegraph, were awaiting us, and next day saw us at Dégioz, and the day after found us established at the Victor Emmanuel Refuge on the flank of the Grand Paradis. The inns at Dégioz and Pont both now deserve recommendation. The one at Pont we found very satisfactory, and the travellers, some of them of Caucasian renown, whose names we read in the Visitors' Book, were without an exception eulogistic in their remarks both about the inn and the mountains; perhaps as one who is 'on some little footing' with most of them, I may here offer the thanks of the Grand Paradis and his neighbours to the visitors for the kind way in which they have spoken of them.

We are assured by a shrewd judge that 'new-made honour doth forget men's names'; it requires little shrewdness to observe the strange incongruity with which men's names are bestowed, but of all incongruous titles the name of this little inn, and of that at Dégioz, have the pre-eminence. At Dégioz, under the very shadow of the Grivola, mine host calls his house the Hôtel du Grand Paradis, while here, at the foot of the Paradis, the signboard proclaims as it creaks in the wind 'The Hôtel de la Grivola.' At the Refuge we spent four nights in peace and plenty. Anderson's stores would have sufficed for a modest field force or a flying squadron. Soups, raisins, chocolates, biscuits, gingerbreads, preserved meats and tongues jostled one another in wild profusion on the mule's back. The humble tea and lemon never failed us, and fowls, eggs and very fair wine arrived from time to time from the Pont

inn. Mora, the mule who carried them up to us, was a source of great pride to her owner, and of admiration to us. Though advanced in years, she was robust and willing, and won me a totally unexpected compliment, for when I said, 'Though your mule has a few white hairs she is still in her prime,' her owner replied, 'Yes, therein she resembles monsieur himself.' Could a courtier have been readier? By the way, one dish at the Hôtel de la Grivola deserves mention. It verges, perhaps, on the 'strange flesh' supposed of old to be eaten on the mountains, but yet does not displease, to use Elia's phrase, 'the criticalness of the censorious palate.' A mess of frogs and kidneys is this dish. The coffee, too, is praiseworthy. You may behold it roasted in the roadway *coram populo* in a time-honoured apparatus and a drizzling rain.

On the morning of August 8 we divided

our forces, Anderson and Sylvain devoting themselves—with very satisfactory results, by the way—to photography, whilst François and I made for the Col du Grand Paradis. I had started with the intention of exploring the Costa Parasseus, but I found it difficult to make the map agree with the glacier and ridges before us. The huge size of the Noaschetta Glacier, which I had not visited for some years, surprised me. At last, however, we made up our minds, and eventually reached the lower end of the Costa. At starting the weather was very cold and the wind biting, and we found the little lake on the top of the Col frozen over, and indulged in a little stone-throwing to test the ice and warm ourselves.

We reached the Costa nearly at its eastern end, and then climbed along it to its western extremity. About the middle of the ridge we found a ruinous cairn. Between

this cairn and the highest point there were one or two bits of amusing climbing. I remember in one place wriggling sideways, with my legs extended over the Val Ciamoseretto. The Costa may be said to end on the eastern side of a big tower—the extremity of the Tresenta ridge.[1] When we sat down to lunch at the end of the Costa we were about on a level with La Tour, 10,578 (Paganini), so that the Bocchetta Goj, which I crossed with Séraphin Henry on August 19, 1883, must be well over 10,000 ft. The views had been glorious. The Charforon and his neighbours I have never seen to such advantage, and far away, to the Maritime Alps, every range stood in more than martial splendour before us, as if they had just taken up their positions in review-order and the dust of their march still clung to them, for scarves of mist lingered at intervals from our feet to the far-

[1] For details see *Alpine Journal*, Vol. XVIII. p. 524.

distant Apennines. To add to our enjoyment, we found rocky armchairs on the sunny side of the ridge, out of reach of the still biting wind. The Val d'Orco, with its climbing forests, seemed to challenge comparison with the rocks and snow, and a little lake in the Ciamoseretto valley, ruffled by the wind and sparkling in the sun every now and again, attracted our eyes and bade us, as it were, assess the depth of the great precipice below us.

On the next day, August 10, the whole party started to examine and photograph the eastern portion of the Noaschetta Glacier. Anderson began operations with the little lake on the top of the Col du Grand Paradis, and then took the imposing picture of the Cresta Gastaldi, Col de l'Abeille, and the mass of the monarch of the Cogne mountains which faces page 134. The day was all that could be wished; the cold had gone, and only a few clouds, lost wanderers from the

tempest's fold, were to be seen at a great height.

We were lucky enough to come upon four full-grown chamois and a little one as they raced down the lower part of the Noaschetta Glacier. We eventually reached at our leisure the lower point of the Becca del Deir Verd, 10,457 ft. (Paganini). The views we here enjoyed were most interesting, both orographically and for their variety and beauty. Anderson was soon very busy. Meantime, François and I took off our coats, put on the rope, and went off in great glee to conquer if we could the higher point of our peak, 10,598 ft. (Paganini). This point is quite startling in its boldness, and gave us a quarter of an hour's very enjoyable amusement. Amongst the rocks flourished the tiny foliage of many Alpine plants, with here and there an occasional flower. *Chrysanthemum alpinum* seemed the most plentiful, though gentians were not wanting.



THE BECCA DEL DEIR VERD

The one side of our little peak overhung, and its precipices were awesome. As to the view, I shall not attempt to describe it, but the following lines of Milton will give a general idea of its magnificence :—

'It was a mountain at whose verdant feet
A spacious plain outstretched in circuit wide
Lay pleasant; from his side two rivers flowed,
The one winding, the other straight, and left between
Fair champaign, with less rivers interveined,
Then meeting joined their tribute to the sea.
Fertile of corn the glebe, of oil, of wine;
With herds the pasture thronged, with flocks the hills.'

François and I, I am afraid, behaved more like two boys let loose for an extra half-holiday than like sober men. When we reached, on our way back to the lower peak, the big tower that forms its summit, I said to François, 'That's a fine rock.' 'Yes, it is,' he answered; 'we'll go up it.' So we did. François climbed it in fine style, and then sent down the rope to me; so I tied myself on, and then climbed up comfortably, with the two guides holding on at the top

in case of need. In the descent we had followed a much easier way.

It takes a good deal when mountaineering to drive out the desire of meat and drink, as Homer puts it. We now had an illustration. The red wine was nearly exhausted, but François, by help of a reservoir extemporised by his ice-axe, succeeded in largely diluting the little that remained. Where was the sugar? All gone. Despair was imminent, but a counsellor was at hand. 'Why don't you try that half-finished pot of strawberry jam?' 'A very good idea.' The jam, the wine, the water promptly fraternised, as, indeed, they could hardly help doing under the vigorous persuasion of the shaking François gave them, and the result proved highly satisfactory to the three topers. I meantime had constructed a humbler reservoir, and with the help of a lemon and a few drops of Marsala mixed a somewhat thin drink, not to be despised under the circum-

stances, though far removed, I was boldly informed, from the excellence of the strawberry brand. We raced down the Moncorvé side of the Col du Grand Paradis in a perfect torrent of stones; and admiring on our way the distant Grande Case, Tsanteleina, and Sassière, as well as the high pastures on the other side of the Val Savaranche, which were of a very beautiful dark green with lovely shadows, we reached the Refuge in good time.

To revert to our arrival at Pont. No sooner did we reach the end of the little hamlet than—

> 'Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
> Whilst the landscape round it measures.'

There is the inn. There is, above all, the beautiful Becca di Monciair. I do not think that I know any mountain in the Alps which for its height asserts itself more proudly, or wears a more majestic mien, than this rock-peak of 11,627 feet. Whether glistening in

the sunshine or, as was more often the case last summer,

'Kerchiefed in a comely cloud,'

it attracted me so strongly that at the sight of it the vague design I had formed in the preceding winter crystallised at once into a resolution to lose no time in trying the northern ridge, so well seen in the accompanying illustration from one of Anderson's excellent photographs.

On the morning of August 10 we started to make this climb. Anderson came with us to the middle of the Monciair Glacier and then remained to photograph. When the apparatus had been duly arranged, and the provisions divided, we left Anderson to reap a rich harvest, and set off.

From the spot where we separated, the great sights were Mont Blanc, pure white, and the self-assertive Grand Nomenon, black, with a tint of red.

To reach the northern ridge of our

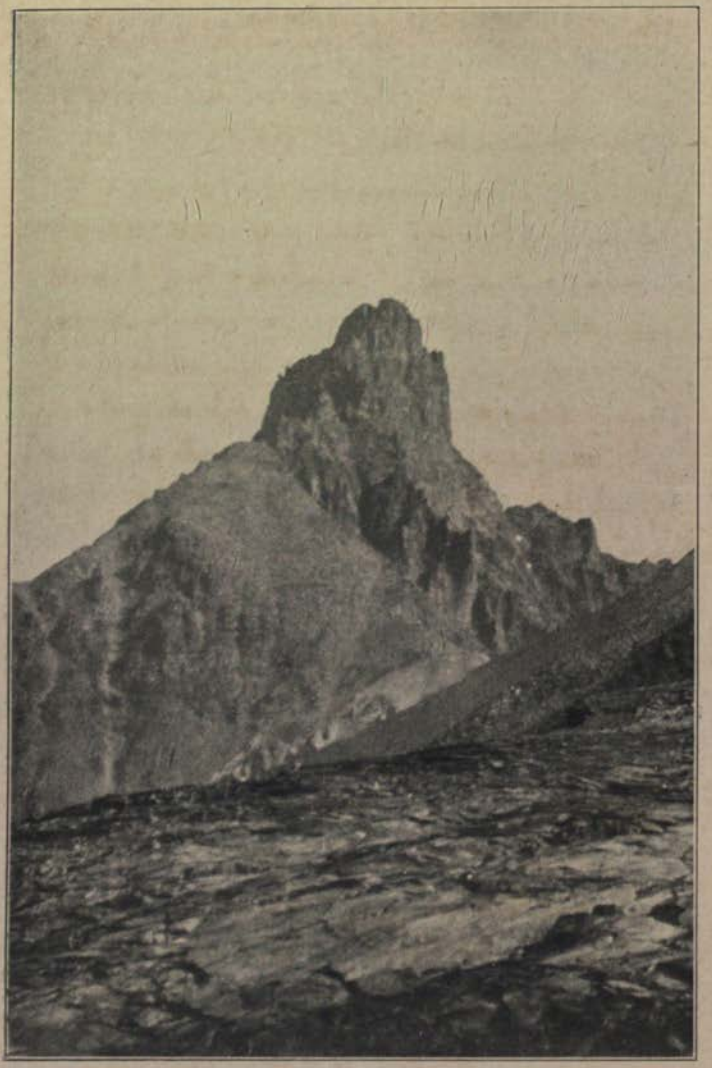


THE BECCA DI MONCIAIR, FROM THE MONCORVÉ GLACIER.

mountain we had to descend a steep slope of ice, raked in the afternoon by stones and ice. One great green-glimmering sérac seemed to watch us threateningly, but one small stone was all that fell. François cut steps as quickly as possible, and we were soon out of danger. We were unanimously of opinion that it would have been better to have struck the ridge at its actual foot. We now reascended over ice and snow to the rocks on the east side of the ridge. We went up these rocks to the right, and then, after turning considerably to the left again, inclined to the right, and so reached the little projection, or shoulder, the first that shows prominently on the ridge. I have recollections of some bare slabs without cracks, but so rough that it was not difficult to get up them. The piece before this was worse, as it was steep, there was ice in the cracks and we were moving slantwise.

For a good part of the time we kept the actual ridge. Sometimes we diverged to the right, occasionally to the left, as François deemed best. Once or twice, after trying to the left, he came down again and we got up on the right. In places the stones were unstable, and met with many abusive epithets.

Below the most prominent tooth in the ridge we stopped for a slight refection. There did I bestow benedictions on the Pont innkeeper, who had had the enterprise to provide us with excellent Aostan peaches. Nor did he afterwards spoil their delectable memory by asking an exorbitant price for them. The ice-clad peak always pleases me best when the glen underneath it opens out into some great valley like that of Aosta, where the peach and the vine revel in the warm sunshine. The nearer the fruit-clad valley the more austere and stern appear the walls and pinnacles of ice which clothe



THE GRAND NOMENON, FROM THE SOUTH.

such giants as the Grand Paradis and his attendants.

Memory brings back to me the passing up of axes, the climbing on Sylvain's shoulders, or the prayer for a good shove as I stuck a foot as high up as I could, and, scraping my hands against the rock, found a precarious handhold, good enough for one who has the faithful François above him with the cord ever tight.

We saw for some time Anderson at his photographic toil, and had glimpses of the Pont inn with its background of rock and its green meadow in front. Then we measured with our eyes the huge mass of the Paradis, admired the majesty of the Grivola, and thought no scorn of the bold bare rock wedge of the Grand Nomenon.

By-and-by we came to the shoulder with the big patch of snow which is so conspicuous from the Moncorvé Glacier, and here I admit my enthusiasm was somewhat

dashed. The rocks, which always inclined to be unstable, and sometimes attained their ideal, were here exchanged for a slippery shale — without good foothold, without danger, but exasperating in the extreme. Every second step was wasted by a slip backwards; but this change in the tactics of our foe, though it annoyed us, could not delay us long. We were soon over the depressing bit, and gripping the last crags with energy, found ourselves on the top almost before we expected. The climb on the whole had furnished much interest not unmixed with excitement, for, as I have mentioned before, our leader had several times had to descend and try another route. François was more complimentary than usual. A good climb, as it always does, had made him happy. Nor was his Monsieur less joyful; to have climbed the new ridge of a beautiful peak was a great satisfaction— to have climbed it not without severe

exertion a greater; for though the view is dear, a good hard tussle to gain it makes it dearer. We did not, as on the previous days, enjoy the great view over the Italian plain. The lazy billows of a great cloud-sea had rolled over all; but one little opening was left through which we could see perfectly a portion of the plain with trees and streams; then, even as we gazed, the clouds closed over it.

When Coolidge and I, with young Christian Almer and Séraphin Henry, had ascended the Monciair by the N.E. ridge from the Col du Charforon in 1885, the snow was in such a perfect state that we had actually walked straight down it towards the Col, but in 1897 this was out of the question. We therefore descended by the rocks, which are not difficult, though, of course, they took more time.

One patch of ice some few feet below the level of the Col gave us a little trouble.

Sylvain, who was leading, cut down to his right against a bare wall of rock, though I think François was in favour of the left-hand side of the slope (I certainly was), so that when a great flake of ice fell off in such a way as to make the right-hand route still more difficult to engineer, and Sylvain was recalled to try on the left, I was well satisfied. We got down all right, for François, who had the last man's very awkward task, managed with his usual skill. After this the snow was very steep, but in excellent condition, and we soon came to the big ice moat which runs across the upper part of the glacier. I paid the rope out to Sylvain, while François held it tight between us, so that if the snow had given way under Sylvain the shock would have fallen on us both as one man. Presently Sylvain called out that he was all right and ready to jump. I advanced near to the edge of the chasm, gave

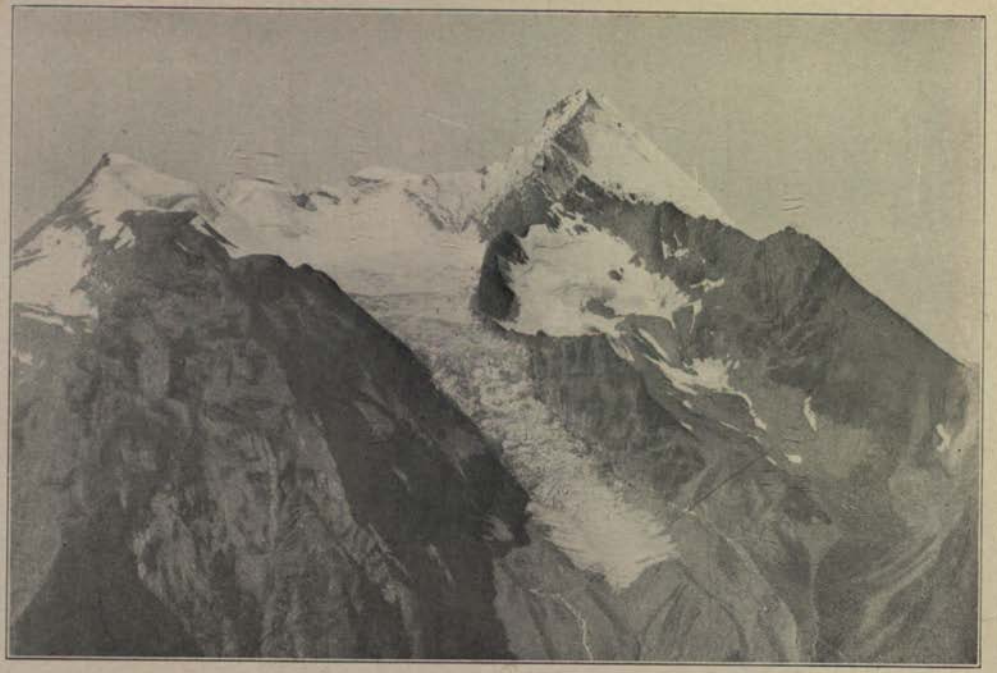
him rope, and saw him land in the soft snow. I followed, nothing loth, for the jump, though perhaps a little formidable in appearance, involved nothing more than a sousing in the snow. François joined us, and we made at a good pace for the big moraine between the Monciair and Moncorvé glaciers, two hours from the summit. There we found Anderson, had a little pleasant refreshment, and afterwards strolled into the Refuge after a most enjoyable day. By taking the north ridge for the ascent, and descending by the north-east ridge, the Monciair becomes perhaps the most tempting of all the many climbs that can be made from the Refuge.

Lovers of the Alpine flora will be interested to hear that about half-way up the north ridge of the Monciair I found a plant of *Ranunculus glacialis*, with two lovely blossoms, smaller and with less pink in them than one usually sees, but the perfec-

tion of shape and symmetry, and with centres of the brightest gold. It was interesting to notice the difference between this and the large plant of the same flower which I found in 1879 close to the top of the Pointe de Ceresole on its *south* side. Though born in the teeth of the bitter north, the tiny blossoms excelled in beauty their brothers of the sun-favoured south.

The Tour d'Arpisson

If it be true that the man who makes two blades of grass grow where one grew before deserves well of his country, it would certainly seem that he who finds at an Alpine centre a second unrivalled view-point where one was previously known deserves well of all mountain lovers. The Pointe du Pousset is well known, or at anyrate the guide-books assume that it is,



THE GRIVOLA, FROM THE ARPISSON CHALETS.

to all visitors to Cogne. Its great features are the view of the Grivola across the Trajo Glacier, and of Cogne at the spectator's feet. As to the view of the Grivola, I am inclined to think that, though undoubtedly striking, the great peak from this side shows little of that beauty for which, when seen from the north, it is so deservedly famous.

In 1896 I started to climb the Tour d'Arpisson, which received its name, though it cannot be said to overhang them, from its nearness to the Arpisson chalets, a spot[1] long known for the beauty of its outlook, but, thanks to the snowstorm, which in that deplorable season daily offered itself

[1] Mr Tuckett in *Peaks, Passes and Glaciers*, Second Series, Vol. II. p. 268, says:—'Their situation is exquisite. Standing on the brow of an extremely precipitous descent, the little village of Epinel in the Val de Cogne is seen at a vast depth, surrounded by rich meadows and much ploughed land; while immediately in front the mass of the Grivola towers up majestically, presenting an appearance which in beauty and grandeur reminded me strongly of the Jungfrau as seen from Mürren, and comparing by no means disadvantageously with the Queen of the Oberland.'

when the climber asked for sunshine, failed to effect more than the passage of the Col de Pila. We did actually see the peak for a minute or two once or twice, and it remained in my recollection as a very desirable climb for a short day. This summer (1897) with my friend Dr Tempest Anderson, and the guides François and Sylvain Pession, I again visited Cogne, and, though the weather was anything but settled, a fine morning did at last reward us after several dark days of nothingness, when the only thing to be done was to 'arrange,' so did François phrase it, the vagrant cur, or to chase from one's room the harmful unnecessary cat, or to study arboriculture in the shape of the genealogy in the dining-room, and count how many names have the suggestive words attached to them, 'Soldier of Napoleon, never came back.' We therefore started for the Arpisson chalets. Soon after passing them we



THE TOUR D'ARPISSON FROM ABOVE THE CHALETS.

divided the party. Anderson took Sylvain and devoted himself to photography, whereof one excellent result may be seen in the accompanying illustration, whilst François and I attacked the Tour d'Arpisson. The weather on this occasion was exceptionally brilliant. We saw very clearly our last year's route to the Col de Pila, and by implication a probable way to the summit of our peak, but decided for the sake of novelty to climb to a notch in the ridge which runs from the Tour d'Arpisson to the Pointe de Garin. As is explained elsewhere,[1] the point 3252 of the Italian map does not stand in the position of the Tour d'Arpisson, but is nearer to the Pointe de Garin; it may be called Punta Fiorito from the huts below it. The Tour d'Arpisson lies about half-way between the Punta Fiorito and the point marked 3033 on the Italian map. The notch some dis-

[1] *Alpine Journal*, Nov. 1897.

tance to the north below that from which we made our ascent, if worthy of the dignity of a name, might be called Colle Fiorito.

The way was mainly over moraine and patches of snow, the last part being decidedly steep and very exasperating, as the rocks had been planed down, and gave very little hold for foot or hand, though the work could not be called difficult. We had not put on the rope, and I must own that several times I was glad to catch hold of François' proffered axe to haul myself up by, though how he managed to stand firm with twelve stone tugging at him is a still unsolved problem. When we had once reached the arête, a complete and welcome change ensued in the character of the climb. The ridge was struck at the top of the broad couloir with a small patch of snow in it nearly half-way up, shown in the illustration. We put on the rope and began a very

pleasant rock-scramble. The Tour d'Arpisson consists of a number of towers—perhaps I should rather say pinnacles. I fortify myself here with the evidence of my friend Mr Compton, and pronounce the number to be seven. We climbed them all, as it was difficult to decide which was the highest. We reached the most westerly in thirty-five minutes without hurry from the notch, and then came to the conclusion that one of the others over which we had crossed was really the highest. We now sat down to eat our lunch and take in the prospect, which amazed both of us, as well by its extent as by its brilliance. It supplied one more example of the fact that a little mountain frequently rewards one with a great view. The Tour d'Arpisson cannot for the distant panorama compete with the Pointe de Garin, of which Mr Compton elsewhere speaks so enthusiastically, but for the Cogne view it is probably better, and certainly takes con-

siderably less time to reach. The great peaks enjoyed the advantage of a fresh vesture of snow, and glistened in extraordinary magnificence. The Grand Combin especially surpassed himself. We saw all the chain of Mont Blanc to perfection; even the usually dark-featured Aiguille des Glaciers had donned a white garment. Such a view of the Cogne peaks as next met our eyes I do not think I have ever seen. Beginning with the grim Nomenon's perfectly snowless tower, we saw everything right round to the Tour de Grauson close by us. I will not say more about these kings of Cogne, except that, to my mind, our view of the Grivola was far finer than that from the Pointe du Pousset. As we ascended from the Arpisson chalets the summit had seemed to rise higher and higher into the blue sky, and the matchless curve of the north ridge had continued to increase in glory. François was enthusiastic. 'This is far better than the Pousset.

I wish M. Anderson were here to photograph the panorama.' Beautiful as Cogne looks from the Pousset, it is, I think, no less beautiful from the Tour d'Arpisson, while from the latter peak the eye sweeps the whole of the Valnontey, from the emerald of the Cogne meadows and the rich dark green of the forest, to the snows of the Col de Grandcroux. A good part of the Valeille was also visible, and the whole of the Val de Grauson, monotonous rather than beautiful, lay revealed, with its ruler the Tersiva, and its glacier at its head.

Doubtless, earlier in the season, when the pastures have not lost their fresh green, this valley would be more impressive. There were two curious little glaciers on the Pene Blanche to the right of the valley as we looked at it. The shining stream of the Valnontey was specially attractive as we lay in the sunshine beneath the 'cærulean pampas of the heavens,' as the latest poet

has it. One thing only is needed to make this peak the favourite view-point for all visitors to Cogne, and that is, a more desirable route to the summit. This Mr Compton has found. The way we followed, as I have said, was not pleasant, though, of course, to climbers it presents no difficulty. The part immediately under the notch was stigmatised by François as 'Quel sale endroit,' and the lower part of the wide couloir, before we got to the wearisome bit, might at times be dangerous from stones. Anderson tells me that he saw several big blocks fall in part across our track some time after we had passed. (We were in shade when on the part referred to.) François thought that the ascent from the Col de Pila would be decidedly easier than our route, an opinion in which I entirely concur. As to the descent on the Grauson side, the way we followed in 1896 from the Col de Pila was decidedly preferable to the route we took

this year, as Mr Compton's 'times' convincingly prove.

After nearly two hours' enjoyment on our tower, on which, though, as I mentioned before, it is not actually the highest, we built a little cairn, we descended in a slanting direction towards the south-east, keeping the Tersiva straight in front of us. 'You go first,' said François, 'and choose the route. This injunction I had no difficulty in carrying out. The slopes were steep but easy, and we seemed to descend very quickly. Some time after we had taken off the rope, François, who had gone on ahead, discovered that we were cut off from the valley, and so we had to make a long traverse to the left. One couloir which we had to cross was distinctly unpleasant, and I was glad of the help of the rope, to which we temporarily had recourse, to get across it. A considerable portion of the skin of my fingers was left behind there, and even François

contributed a little from his stalwart arm. Eventually, as we kept still to the left, François scented out a badly-marked little track, and we got down to the last cliffs above the Grauson torrent. Edelweiss was fairly plentiful in this part. The upper slopes had been clothed with the grass from which wild hay is made, and were very unpleasant to walk upon. For my own part, I prefer ice. After crossing several little streams, the track became rather more distinct, and we at last reached the Grauson path just after it crosses the main torrent by a bridge. All the slopes on this side of the Arpisson are unwooded; only in one or two little hollows close to the main torrent did we find a few small pines.

When we had reached the proper path we hurried on, and about twenty minutes above the bridge, near Moline, found Anderson and Sylvain, who had made a traverse from the Arpisson chalets by way of Gimilian,


Gran Nomenon
C. Bellfiore
Grivola
G. Grivola
GRIVOLA
Cogne
Valnontey
M. Herban
M. Leyzier
Maisonnasse
Leyzina
Chesire
Bardoney
GRAND PARADISO
GRAND P. PIERRE
M. Nero
Monte Nero
Tresenta
Becca dell'Alpetta
Cuccagna
SKETCH MAP
OF THE
MOUNTAINS OF COGNE
taken chiefly from the
ITALIAN GOVERNMENT MAP.
ENGLISH MILES
NATURAL SCALE, 1 : 91000

and spoke enthusiastically of the views which they had enjoyed.

It will be plain, I think, from what has been said, that if the route to the Col de Pila from the Arpisson chalets is followed and the ascent of the Tour d'Arpisson completed from that pass, and Mr Compton's route followed for the return to Cogne, the Tour d'Arpisson is destined to become the peak most resorted to by visitors to Cogne who wish to study in the most enjoyable way Cogne, its mountains, especially its Grivola, its valleys, and its mighty and not very far distant neighbours, from the Combin to the Trelatête. The Tour d'Arpisson has also another advantage over the Pointe du Pousset, in that you may go up by one valley and return by another. Such is the almost latest left of all Cogne's peaks.

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